

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



1 TIMOTHY

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1 Timothy

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How to Have a Good Conscience

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 16, 1994

Main Scripture Text: 1 Timothy 1:18–19

“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.”

1 TIMOTHY 1:18–19

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Introduction

Would you take God’s precious Word and find 1 Timothy chapter 1. Paul is talking to his son in the faith, and telling him how to fight a good fight. First Timothy chapter 1—I begin reading in verse 18. This is what Paul says to this young warrior: *“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;”*—ladies and gentlemen, we are at war, and don’t forget it. And then, Paul, telling Timothy about the warfare, gives him this admonishment in verse 19—he says to him, “Timothy, you are to be *‘holding faith, and a*

good conscience...”—underscore “a good conscience”—“*holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck*” (1 Timothy 1:18–19). Now if you want to wreck your ship, and lose the war, fail to have a good conscience. I want to talk to you, today, about a good conscience.

John MacArthur has written a book called, *The Vanishing Conscience*; and, in that book, he tells a story that struck me, when I read it. In 1984, in Spain, there was a horrible airplane wreck. An airplane plowed into the side a mountain, and all on board died. When they investigated that plane wreck, they found that thing they call the *black box*. And the black box records what happened in the cockpit: the words of the pilot, the instructions that he may have received, and so forth. And there was an eerie thing that they found, when they listened to the recorder in the black box, because there was a voice that came on in English. And the voice, sensitized by computer—and in a shrill way—began to say, “Pull up! Pull up! Pull up!” And then, the black box recorded the pilot of that airline saying, “Shut up, *gringo!*” and he flipped the switch. “Shut up, *gringo!*” Evidently, he thought that the thing was malfunctioning; and so, he overrode the warning system, and plowed into the side of a mountain.

God has placed in you a warning system. That warning system is your conscience, that will sometimes say to you, “Pull up! Pull up! Pull up!” before you crash and burn. And you dare not switch it off, override it—not in the warfare we’re in. You must be careful to maintain a good conscience.

Now let’s talk a little bit about the conscience.

I. The Characteristics of the Conscience

First of all, I want to talk to you about the characteristics of the conscience. And we’re going to be studying in many passages of Scripture. And if you’re not nimble with your fingers to find these passages, then maybe you want to get just a pen and a piece of paper, and jot them down, because you’re not going to be able to remember everything. And you need to go back, and refer to these, and it’ll be a good study for your family devotions this week—to study many of these scriptures. But what is the conscience?

Like that warning system, the conscience is not an enemy. Your conscience is the very framework of your soul. God did not give animals a conscience. God gave human beings a conscience. As a matter of fact, animals cannot make moral judgments. Animals are *candy right* and *smack wrong*. An animal does good—you give him a little reward. If he does bad, you may chastise him. And that’s the way animals learn. But human beings can make moral judgments. Somebody has said that, “Man is the only creature of God that can blush, and he’s the only one that needs to.”

Even the heathen have a conscience. Even those who don’t know God have a conscience. Romans chapter 2, verse 14, and following—listen to what Paul said about

the Gentiles—and when he says *Gentiles*, he’s talking about the heathen: “*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law*”—that is, the law of God, the Ten Commandments—“*do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness*” (Romans 2:14–15). And so you have a conscience, and your conscience is that which is in you that judges your actions—that judges your thoughts—according to the highest standards you have.

And if you violate your conscience, you’re going to pay the price. There will be anguish. There will be regret. There will be fear. There will be disquietude. But if you follow your conscience, you find joy, and serenity, and self-respect. In the Old Testament, the word *conscience* is often translated, “heart.” *Heart*—that’s the inner part of a man. When the Bible says that Pharaoh hardened his heart, it just simply means that he steeled his conscience (Exodus 8:15).

A little boy, when asked to describe *conscience*, said, “Well, *conscience* is that thing that feels bad when everything else feels good.” Well, that’s not the best definition of *conscience*, because it’s too negative. Or, a mother, who was a homeschooler, was trying to teach her boy the difference between *conscious* and *conscience*—they sound alike. And she was trying to get the boy to know the difference, and to spell the difference between *conscious* and *conscience*. And she said, “Son, do you know the difference?” He said, “Yes, I do.” He says, “*Conscious* is when you are aware of something, and *conscience* was when you wish you weren’t.”

There is a difference, and I pray that you will have a consciousness of your conscience, and you will know that there is something that God put in you.

A. **Kinds of Conscience**

Now listen. The Bible mentions various kinds of conscience.

1. **A Good Conscience**

First of all, a good conscience. Look at our text, again. The Bible says, here, having “*a good conscience*” (1 Timothy 1:19). A good conscience is a wonderful thing. A good conscience means that you know that you have made everything right. When Paul was being interrogated and persecuted for preaching the gospel, he could stand before the council, and he could say, in Acts chapter 24 and verse 16: “*And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void to offence toward God, and toward men*” (Acts 24:16). Can you say that, right now? “God, as I stand here, there is no offense between Thyself and myself and any other human being.” That, friend, is a good conscience.

Bill Gothard said this: “A good conscience is that inner freedom of spirit and assurance from knowing that you have a transparency toward everyone, that no one is

able to point a finger at you, and accuse you of wrongs toward him that you've not made right." What a freedom that is! It gives such great liberty. Because, that doesn't mean that people are not going to accuse you. You're going to get accused. And the more you live for the Lord Jesus, and the more you're like the Lord Jesus, the more they're going to come down on you like a hammer. But when they do, it's so important that you have a good conscience.

Now listen to 1 Peter chapter 3—and, by the way, turn to this one, and mark it. It's such a great one. He's talking about the trouble you're going to get into as a Christian. And I've told you, many times, that Jesus Christ *did not* come *to get you out of* trouble; *He came to get into trouble with you*. Now look, in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 13—he asks this question: “*And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*” Now he doesn't say, “You won't suffer.” He says, “You won't be harmed,” because the next verse says, “*But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye:*”—“Did I read that right, Pastor? *Suffer...happy*, in the same sentence?” Yes, “*but...if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;*”—but now listen to this—“*but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:*”—now listen to this next part—“*having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ*” (1 Peter 3:13–16).

Do you know what that means in plain English? They're going to come against you. They cannot harm you, but you will suffer. But if you suffer, be happy. Don't be afraid. Keep your eyes unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and make absolutely sure that everything they say about you is false; and, for His name's sake, have a good conscience. And they will say some bad things, but make absolutely certain that you're void of offense toward man and toward God. And that removes the fear. You cannot be terrified by your adversaries.

You see—it's a bad conscience that puts fear in your life. Adam and Eve were walking with God in the garden; and then, sin came in, and their conscience was defiled. And they lost a good conscience. And therefore, when God came into the Garden of Eden again, Adam and Eve hid themselves. And Adam's first recorded words, after he sinned, were these: “*I was afraid*” (Genesis 3:10). Now if your conscience is not right, you'll be afraid. “*The wicked flee when no man pursueth*” (Proverbs 28:1).

Do you know why some people won't come to church? The same reason that Adam hid in the garden: They don't want to see God. They don't want to face God. The reason that some people don't want to pray? Do you know why you have difficulty sometime having a quiet time? You don't want to look God in the face. Your conscience bothers

you. Friend, when your conscience is clear, you long for fellowship; you want fellowship with God. But it's the defiled conscience that brings that fear into your life.

You know, David said, in Psalm 51—after he'd sinned, and committed adultery with Bathsheba, he said, *"My sin is ever before me"* (Psalm 51:3). Night and day, the thing that David had done reverberated through his soul: *"My sin is ever before me"* (Psalm 51:3). He lived with fear. You know, every time he saw a couple of people whispering, he wondered, "I wonder, do they know?" Every time a messenger would come to the palace: "I wonder, have I been found out?" If they had telephones in that day, every time the telephone rang, David would have jumped: *"My sin is ever before me"* (Psalm 51:3). You see, friend, that conscience? That is a good conscience—just gives that great peace. A sleeping pill will never take the place of a good conscience. A good conscience is such a soft pillow.

*Trust me no tortures which the poets feign
Can match the fierce unutterable pain
He feels, who night and day devoid of rest
Carries his own accuser in his breast.*

—DECIMUS JUNIUS JUVENAL

Flattery cannot heal a bad conscience; and, friends, slander can't hurt one. You've got to have a good conscience.

2. A Defiled Conscience

Now there's another kind of conscience—not only a good conscience, but you can have a defiled conscience. Put this scripture down: Titus chapter 1, verse 15: *"Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled"* (Titus 1:15). You cannot always let your conscience be your guide, unless God guides your conscience. You can have a defiled conscience.

Your conscience is like a sundial. It's no better than the light that shines upon it. Don't go out in the middle of the night, and look at your sundial with a flashlight, if you want to know what time it is. Your conscience is like that; it's no better than the light that shines upon it. Or, your conscience is like a thermostat. It registers wherever it's set. So the headhunter in the jungle sets his conscience, his thermostat, in one place. He doesn't feel bad when he lops off someone's head. He feels right good about it. Or, your conscience is like a skylight. I just put a skylight in my house to let some light in. Now the skylight only operates if you keep it in the light, and if you keep it clean. And that's the way your conscience is. If you put it in darkness, or in dirt, then it doesn't operate as it ought.

Now that's the reason Paul told Timothy, in 1 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 9, "You are to hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Timothy 3:9)—a pure

conscience. Because your conscience can be defiled, you've got to have a pure conscience. Now sometimes, a man will do wrong, and he'll say, "My conscience doesn't bother me." Well, that's not the last question. His conscience may be defiled; and, like a thermostat, it may be set at the wrong place.

3. A Seared Conscience

A good conscience; a defiled conscience—but it can get worse: You can have a seared conscience. First Timothy chapter 4 and verse 2—Paul warned the young warrior about some that he would come up against. He talked about those people who would speak *"lies in hypocrisy."* And why? *"Having their conscience seared with a hot iron"* (1 Timothy 4:2).

You know how the doctor, or the dentist, or the surgeon, can take an extremely hot tool, and burn flesh? He can cauterize flesh so as to stop bleeding. But when he does, he damages the nerve endings there. And some have cauterized their conscience; they have seared their conscience. They have taken the white-hot poker of willful disobedience, and have thrust it down deep into the soul; and, they have seared their conscience. So not only is it defiled; it's just dead. They don't feel anything anymore.

4. An Evil Conscience

But that's still not the lowest point that a man can get. He can go from a good conscience, to a defiled conscience, to a seared conscience. But you know, the worst kind of a conscience to have is an evil conscience. Hebrews 10, verse 22—Paul is talking about worshiping our Lord, and he says, *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience"* (Hebrews 10:22).

An evil conscience—what is an *evil conscience*? This is the final state of depravity. Not only does a man have a defiled conscience, where he may not know exactly what is right or wrong, but he operates according to his high standards. Or, not only may a man have a seared conscience, where he ceases to feel even those high standards that he's set for himself, but he can drop so low that he actually gets an evil conscience. And what is an *evil conscience*? An evil conscience is one that willfully declares, "What is good is bad, and what is bad is good." It approves evil, and disapproves right. Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 20—listen to it: *"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"* (Isaiah 5:20). That's the bottom rung.

II. The Corruption of the Conscience

Now we talked about the conscience described, and I've given you various kinds. Let me talk to you about the conscience defiled, the conscience considered, and the conscience corrupted. How does your conscience get defiled?

Now Paul told Timothy, “Timothy, keep a good conscience, because if you don’t, you’re going to have a shipwreck, son. Or, you’re going to be like that abeyant pilot: you’re going to plow into a mountain” (1 Timothy 1:19).

What happens to a man’s conscience? Do you know what is wrong in America, today? We’ve corporately lost our national conscience. You know, sin, today, has never been more outrageous, and more overlooked. If you could back yourself out of this generation 20 years ago, and then just suddenly come into it, you would be shocked, and you would be outraged. But you’re not shocked and outraged anymore. We’re like the frog slowly being boiled to death in the kettle. Drugs, prostitution, pornography, sexual perversion, crime—these things are epidemics. Gang violence—our streets are war zones. The criminals are becoming both younger and bolder—younger and bolder. And our system—our prison system—is overcrowded. We don’t have enough room to warehouse the criminals.

But even the grossest sin is never described for what it is: a transgression against a righteous and a holy God. We’re trying to look at it as some socioeconomic problem that can be solved with midnight basketball, bouncing a ball. Why is it that we never come to see what it is? What has happened to the old-fashioned word *sin*, which is against a supremely holy God?

In the book that I reference, *The Vanishing Conscience*, MacArthur tells about a Mr. Bob Vernon, who was an Assistant Police Chief in Los Angeles. And he described some of the people that he has to deal with, and here’s what he called them: *moral flatliners*. Do you know when the line goes flat, and the patient is dead, and that little line goes *beep, beep, beep*? He calls them *moral flatliners*. He talks about young people who have adopted crime as a career, and those heinous acts they can commit with no apparent remorse.

He gave an example—a youngster that he had arrested. He was a member of a gang, and he had adopted the name *Cool Aid*. And what this boy had done—there was a school parade, and a float, and some homecoming people were on the float. This young man walks up with a gun, and begins to shoot at them, and to wound them, seriously wound them—one, critically wounded. He didn’t try to hide it. They put the finger on him. They arrested him. They took him down to the station, and they interrogated *Cool Aid*. They said, “Why did you do that? What was your motive?” “Well,” he said, “I needed to get arrested, because,” he said, “I need to go to prison. Well,” he said, “I need some medical treatment. I can get it there.” He said, “I’ve got venereal disease.” He said, “They can treat that there.” He said, “Also, I need some dental work.” He said, “So they’ll do that dental work, while I’m there.” He said, “Also,” he said, “you know, I need to get buffed up, buffed out. That is I want, too: I want to lift weights. I want to build myself up. And so,” he said, “you know, when I go to prison, I can get into the

gymnasium; and, I can do this. I can build up my body. But,” he said, “before I went, I had to get a rep”—r-e-p—that’s a reputation. “So I got me a reputation, so, when I go to prison, I’ll be known as the enforcer.” He had it all figured out. He was a moral flatliner: had no remorse, no thought at all about taking a gun, and shooting people. That, friend, is an evil conscience—no conscience at all.

And that’s the kind of a world that we’re living in today. I mean, we, today, are proud of our sin. At the checkout counter, look at the tabloids, the headlines: what do they scream? Perversion, adultery, gluttony, extravagancy, arrogance, selfishness, drunkenness, immorality, anger—all kinds of vice. These things are worn as badges of honor. The tee-shirts that people are wearing, with filth, and vulgarity, and profanity! I mean, they boast about it. What has happened to us? Corporately, we have lost our conscience.

A. Self-Determination

Turn to Romans chapter 1. Let me show you what happens, if we ever live in a Romans chapter 1 society. We’re living in one. And I want you to see how a man defiles his conscience, how a man corrupts his conscience, and how society corrupts a conscience. Romans chapter 1—begin in verse 18: *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;”*—now, the word *hold* literally means, “who suppress, who repress, who smother the truth.” Why is this? Why is God so angry with these people? Verse 19—*“because...”*—look at it—*“because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them”* (Romans 1:18–19) Anybody knows that God exists, and anybody knows that God is great. That’s the reason why the Bible says, *“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God”* (Psalm 14:1). It *“is manifest in them”*—that’s their conscience. *“God hath shewed it unto them”*—that’s creation. Conscience and creation say God exists. Every man, every woman: *“That which may be known of God is manifest in them...For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen,”*—you don’t have to be a rocket scientist—*“being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse”*—now, you have, here, mankind’s self-determination. Man says, “No God for me. I don’t want this God.” And so he just willfully turns his back on God.

B. Self-Deception

Now that is self-determination, and it leads to self-deception. Look, in verse 21: *“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart”*—that is, their conscience—*“was darkened”*—their foolish heart was darkened. Now nature abhors a vacuum. And if man doesn’t believe what is right, he’s going to believe what is wrong.

And so he becomes selfishly indifferent. He's not thankful. He doesn't value God. Then, he gets a sort of a sophisticated ignorance. Look, in verse 22: *"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."* And then, he goes into shameful idolatry—verse 23 and following: *"And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things"* (Romans 1:18–23).

You say, "Well, we're past that." Oh no, we're not. We're in the middle of it. We're now worshiping Mother Earth rather than Father God. Listen, folks. This is not old-fashioned. This is not out-of-date. This is 20th-century.

C. Self-Destruction

So what you have is mankind's, first of all, self-determination; then, his self-deception; and then, his self-destruction. Now we're talking about the demise of the conscience.

1. Sexually Perverted

Look, if you will, in verse 26: *"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet"* (Romans 1:26–27). They became sexually perverted, because their conscience has been kicked to death. This speaks of the unnatural, and vile, and filthy sins of Sodom. The Bible has so much to say about that.

2. Socially Perverted

But now, not only did they become sexually perverted—they become socially perverted. Look, if you will, in verse 28 and following—*"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful"* (Romans 1:28–31). For further information, read this morning's newspaper, or any national newspaper.

3. Spiritually Perverted

Self-destruction: sexually perverted, socially perverted and spiritually perverted. Now coming to verse 32: *"Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them"* (Romans 1:32). Where do we get our kicks? Where do we get our jollies in society today? Where does modern entertainment center? In sex, in perversion, in

drunkenness, in debauchery—that’s where we get our pleasure. Not only do we do these things, we have pleasure in those that do them, and we have smothered our conscience; we have kicked our conscience to death, individually and corporately.

III. The Cleansing of the Conscience

Now here’s the third and final thing. I have talked to you about the conscience—the characteristics of the conscience. I have talked to you about the corruption of the conscience: how a person can get a conscience that is either defiled, or deadened, or depraved. Now let me talk to you about the cleansing of the conscience. It is so important—so important—that you have a good conscience, that you can say, “Hey, nothing between my soul and the Savior; nothing between me and my neighbor.” How wonderful! How do you do that?

A. You Need to Get Saved

First of all, if you’re not saved, you need to get saved. That’s an old-fashioned word, isn’t it? But it’s a good one. You need to get saved. Put this verse in your margin—Hebrews chapter 9, verse 14: *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”* (Hebrews 9:14). Oh, it is the precious blood of Jesus Christ, who by the Holy Spirit died in agony and blood upon that cross. When you accept Him, when you receive Him, the blood of Jesus becomes a divine detergent to save me from wrath, and make me pure. And the blood purges, cleanses, your conscience—the precious blood of Jesus! Christians are not just nice people—they’re new creatures. Second Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17 says: *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

B. You Need Assurance of Your Salvation

And when this happens, then you have assurance. We talk a lot about the assurance of salvation. And some of you are saved, but you don’t have any assurance. And you know why you don’t have any assurance? You don’t deserve any assurance, because your conscience is defiled. Listen to Hebrews chapter 10, verse 22: *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience”* (Hebrews 10:22). If a person says, “Well, yes, I have received Christ as my personal Savior and Lord; yes, I did that; yes, I trusted Him; but, I still have all these nagging doubts,” you’d better go back and find out if you have that pure conscience. Get saved.

C. You Need to Confess and Forsake Every Known Sin

Now if you, as a Christian, have allowed your conscience as a Christian to become

defiled, then you need to confess and forsake every known sin. God's Word says, in Proverbs chapter 28 and verse 13: *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy"* (Proverbs 28:13). You cover them, and God will uncover them. You uncover them, and God will cover them. Hallelujah! *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy"* (Proverbs 28:13). Get saved, and God—the Holy Spirit of God—will purge your conscience. If you stumble, and fall, and fail, immediately uncover that. Confess it to the Lord.

I was in my study yesterday, and I was working on a deadline to get a book to the publisher. I had to put it *Air Express*. And I'm sitting there, and Joyce says, "Adrian, come in here, please. I want to ask you something." And she brought me in there. I said, "Da da da da da," and I was huffy with her—"Da da da da da da da da da"—went back, and sat down, working on a Christian book. And God said, "Adrian, go tell her you're sorry. Go tell her you were rude, and ask her to forgive you." And I had to do that. But friend, the juices started to flow again. The joy was there again.

You see, when you try to cover it, or smother it, all you do is just harden your heart. You've got to keep your heart tender toward the Lord. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). And you need to ask forgiveness—to have a clean conscience—to any one that you've wronged—not only to God, but to others. Matthew chapter 5, verses 23 and 24: *"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee,"*—not if you have anything against him; if he's got anything against you—*"leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift"* (Matthew 5:23–24).

Or, if there's somebody, on the other hand, that you need to get forgiveness from, or somebody that you need to give forgiveness to, our Lord says, in Matthew chapter 6, verses 14 and 15: *"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"* (Matthew 6:14–15).

And if possible, you need to make restitution. If you've done somebody wrong, and it's in your hand to make restitution, you need to do it. Listen to Numbers chapter 5, verses 6 and 7: *"Speak unto the children of Israel, when a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD, and that person be guilty; then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principle thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed"* (Numbers 5:6–7). Make restitution. That's why Zacchaeus said, "Lord, if I've defrauded any man, I'll restore to him fourfold" (Luke 19:8). Make restitution.

When I was a little boy, we had a roomer living with us—a woman. She was a roomer who rented a room in our house. I was a little fellow. I don't even think I'd started school yet. But I went into her room. And there, on her dresser, I saw some Indianhead pennies, and I took them. When I got to be a grown man, I got saved. God, by His grace, saved me. I was a teenage boy, when I was saved, really. But one day, I was praying, and, the Lord said, "You're a thief." "Well, God, you forgave me." "I know, but have you ever written to Vera, and told her that you stole from her, and asked her to forgive you, and to make restitution?" I realized I hadn't. It was the hardest and yet the sweetest thing I'd done in a long time—just to sit down, and say, "I went into your room, took something that was yours, and I'm sorry. Here's some money. I hope it's enough to cover the value of those antique coins. But I'm so sorry." That was, in a way, embarrassing, but so sweet, so sweet—to have a conscience devoid of offense toward God, toward man.

And when that happens, they can say anything they want about you, but you say, "It's all right. There is nothing between my soul and the Savior, nothing between my soul and my mate." And friend, that is a powerful way to live. What joy, what strength! And if, today, that warning system is saying to you, "Pull up! Pull up! Pull up!" don't switch it off. Listen to it. If you don't, you may make shipwreck.

Conclusion

Let's bow in prayer. We've sung, today, about God's amazing grace. It's so wonderful—glorious, marvelous grace that rescued me! And God's grace wants to rescue you today, and you can be saved, saved, saved, for sure, and saved forever, if you will repent of your sin, and trust Christ as your personal Savior and Lord.

Pray a prayer like this: "O God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. And I know, Lord, that You have my welfare in Your heart. Jesus, thank You that You love me so much that You took my sins and paid for them with Your blood." Thank our Lord Jesus. "I believe You're the Son of God. I, now, by faith, open my heart. I receive You into my life as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin; save me, Lord Jesus." Pray that from your heart: "Forgive my sin, and save me, Lord Jesus. Save me; purge my conscience. Save me, Lord Jesus." Did you ask Him? Then, pray this way: "Thank You for saving me. I receive it by faith. I don't look for a sign. I don't ask for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. I receive it by faith. You're my Lord and Savior, right now. And now Lord Jesus, give me the courage and the strength to make this public. Help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

How to Have a Good Conscience

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 16, 1994

Main Scripture Text: 1 Timothy 1:18–19

“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.”

1 TIMOTHY 1:18–19

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Introduction

Well, take God’s Word and turn to 1 Timothy chapter 1. I’m going to begin reading, in just a moment, in verse 18. Today, we’re talking about the conscience, and how to have a good conscience. We’re in a war, folks, and in this war your chief weapon against the devil, and your chief source of strength and inner peace, is going to be a good conscience.

Now the Apostle Paul is talking to his preacher boy, Timothy. He’s giving him some fatherly advice. First Timothy 1, verse 18: *“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; holding faith,”*—now, notice this next phrase—*“and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck”* (1 Timothy 1:18–

19). Now what Paul is saying to Timothy is this: “Timothy, you’ve got to have a good conscience, because if you don’t, you’re headed for disaster. You’re going to have moral and spiritual shipwreck, if you don’t keep your conscience—your compass, your warning system—intact.”

John MacArthur has written a book that I have read, called *The Vanishing Conscience*. And in that book, he tells the story of an airliner in Spain that crashed into a mountain—Avianca Airlines. This liner just plunged into a mountainside, and crashed and burned, and everybody on board perished. They went through the rubble, and they found that little black box that records the words of the people in the cockpit—the last words, so many times. And they found it, and they were shocked, when they played it, because there’s a warning system on those airplanes; and, it sometimes speaks in English. Of course, this one was in English, and they heard the warning system say to the pilot, “Pull up! Pull up!” The sound was shrill, because it had been sensitized to have a metallic warning sound: “Pull up! Pull up!” And then, in the black box, they heard these words—the pilot said, “Shut up, *gringo!*” and flicked the switch. The last words: “Shut up, *gringo!*”

Evidently, he thought the thing was malfunctioning, and just simply turned it off, and plowed into the mountainside. Now your conscience is very much like that warning system. And God loves you, and God does not want you to end up a moral and spiritual shipwreck; and so, God has put that warning system in us that sometimes says to us, “Pull up! Pull up! Pull up!—or you will crash and burn.”

We’re going to talk about the conscience, today, and three headings. First of all, we’re going to talk about the conscience and what it is—the description of the conscience, the characteristics of the conscience. Then, we’re going to talk about the corruption of the conscience—how your conscience can become defiled. And then, we’re going to talk, thank God, about the cleansing of the conscience—how you can have what Paul told Timothy to have—and, that is a good conscience.

Now your conscience is not your enemy. Your conscience is one of the tremendous gifts of God to the human soul. Animals, for example, don’t have a conscience. Now animals can be afraid. A dog knows that he might get a rolled-up newspaper, if he does certain things. But he has no real remorse about it; he just doesn’t want to get whacked with a rolled-up newspaper. Or, he knows, if he does good, he might get a tidbit; if he performs a trick. That’s what we call *smack wrong and candy right*. But he doesn’t have a conscience. He has no moral sense. He’s not able to take into evaluation moral characteristics and judgments, and act thereupon. Somebody has said that man is the only creature of God that can blush, and the only creature that needs to.

Now even if you’re a heathen, even if you’re unsaved, you have a conscience. Paul talked to a heathen, in Romans chapter 2, and beginning in verse 14. He calls them the

Gentiles, and he says, “*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law,*”—he’s talking about the law of God—“*do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves.*”—now listen to this—“*which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness*” (Romans 2:14–15).

I. The Characteristics of the Conscience

Now what is your conscience? It’s that judge on the inside that judges you according to your actions and thoughts, according to the highest standard that you have. Generally speaking, if you disobey and override your conscience, you have a feeling of anguish, a feeling of regret, a feeling of fear; if you follow your conscience, you have a tranquility, a joy, a peace, a self-respect—you generally feel good. In the Old Testament, the word for *conscience* is often “heart.” For example, the Bible says that Pharaoh hardened his heart (Exodus 8:15). We would say that he *steeled* his conscience.

A little boy was asked to describe what the *conscience* was. He said, “Well, your conscience—that’s what feels bad when everything else feels good.” Well, that’s not exactly a good definition of conscience, because it implies that, if you feel good, you’re doing something bad. But our Lord wants you to have joy, and wants you to have pleasure.

A mother was teaching her son—I suppose, maybe, he was a homeschooler—teaching him to spell, and the definition of words. He was looking at the words *conscious* and *conscience*—*conscious* and *conscience*—and she was trying to teach him to spell the two words, and see the difference. And she said, “Son, do you know the difference between *conscious* and *conscience*? He said, “Indeed,” he says, “*conscious* is when you are aware of something; *conscience* is when you wish you were not.” There are certain things that we know that we sometimes wish we did not know, because our conscience bothers us.

A. Types of Conscience

The truth of the matter is that you can have various kinds of consciences. Let me describe.

1. A Good Conscience

For example, the Bible speaks of a good conscience, in our verse. The Bible says here—look, if you will, in verse 19: “*Holding faith, and a good conscience*” (1 Timothy 1:19). Or, go over to chapter 3, verse 9: “*Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience*” (1 Timothy 3:9). Now that’s a conscience, as God wants it to be—a very good conscience. What a wonderful, wonderful thing it is to have a good conscience—that is, a conscience that has made everything right.

When the Apostle Paul would be hauled before courts—before tribunals and

things—for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, he would always look to his conscience; and, if his conscience was all right, he had great boldness. For example, he said, in Acts chapter 24 and verse 16: *“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void to offence toward God, and toward men”* (Acts 24:16). “I’m right with my Father, and I’m right with my neighbor”—*“to have...a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.”* That is, there’s no one who can point a finger of blame.

Bill Gothard said that, “A good conscience is that inner freedom of spirit and assurance from knowing you have a transparency toward everyone—that no one is able to point a finger at you, and accuse you of wrongs toward him that you’ve never made right. It gives you such liberty.

I want you to turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter chapter 3; begin in verse 13, and it tells how you can be so strong when you’re in trouble. Now you’re going to get into trouble. If you’re a Christian, you are a twice-born person in a world of once-born people, and you’re going to be going against the tide most of the time. Don’t think this world is going to honor you, if you give your heart to Jesus Christ; it will break your neck, if it can. And when that happens, does that mean you’re going to cave in, that you’re going to have a little pity party? No, it means that you can be wonderfully and gloriously happy, if you have a good conscience.

Now listen to this. Peter is getting these Christians ready for persecution. And by the way, in these last days, you’re going to know persecution. *“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”* (2 Timothy 3:12). If you’re not, it’s just simply because your not living godly in Christ Jesus. The Bible is clear about that. Now when it comes, listen to what Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 13: *“And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?”* (1 Peter 3:13). Did you know the devil can never harm you? He may hurt you, but he can’t harm you.

Now listen. Verse 14 says, *“But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid...”*—did I put those things right in the same verse? *Suffer and happy*—is that in the same verse? Indeed it is: *“But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be ye troubled”* (1 Peter 3:14). Well, that’s a pretty big command, isn’t it? I mean, here are folks ready to throw you to the lion, or put you in the prison, or confiscate your goods, and Peter said, “Well, they can’t really harm you. I mean, if they kill you, you’re just going to Heaven; if they take your goods, you get greater reward in Heaven. And so they can’t harm you, but you might suffer. But if you suffer, be happy, and don’t be afraid.”

Well, how do you do that? Look, in verse 15: *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience;”*—when you’re right with God, and void of offense toward men, it really doesn’t matter what they

say. Now listen, folks. It really doesn't matter what they say—*“that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ”* (1 Peter 3:15–16). *No* flattery *can* heal *a* bad conscience, *and no* slander *can* hurt *a* good *one*. No flattery can heal a bad conscience; no slander can hurt a good one. Say, “Hey, if it is false, and it is for Christ’s sake, then I’m happy if it happens.”

A good conscience removes fear. That’s the reason the Apostle Paul was so confident when he stood before those tribunals, but that’s the reason that other people are so fearful, so many times. Why did Adam and Eve hide from God, in the Garden of Eden? They didn’t have a good conscience. And therefore, when God came walking in the midst of the garden, they hid themselves; they didn’t want to look God in the face. A person without a good conscience cannot look God in the face. That’s the reason some people won’t come to church. They don’t want to look God in the face. That’s the reason some people have difficulty praying. Do you have difficulty getting into a quiet time, and praying? You don’t have a desire to pray? You know why? Your conscience. If your heart was right, and bubbling over, you’d just want to be in the presence of God. You just don’t want to be in the presence of God. Your conscience is not a good conscience.

You remember what David said, in Psalm 51, after he had sinned? He said, *“My sin is ever before me”* (Psalm 51:3). Night and day, day and night, the thing that David had done reverberated through his soul. It echoed in his consciousness. It defiled his conscience. And therefore, if David would see two people over there talking, he’d say, “I wonder what they’re talking about. I wonder if they know.” Every time a letter would be delivered to the palace, he’d say, “I wonder if that is an indictment.” If they had telephones in that day, every time one rang, he’d jump, because his sin was ever before him (Psalm 51:3). The Bible says, *“The wicked flee when no man pursueth,”* but a good conscience—it just takes the fear out (Proverbs 28:1). You can just live with absolute confidence. A good conscience will be much better than a sleeping pill. A good conscience is a soft pillow. A poet said:

*Trust me no tortures which the poets feign
Can match the fierce unutterable pain
He feels, who night and day devoid of rest
Carries his own accuser in his breast.*

—DECIMUS JUNIUS JUVENAL

2. A Defiled Conscience

Now there’s a good conscience; but, secondly, there is a defiled conscience. Titus chapter 1 and verse 15—listen to this: *“Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled”* (Titus 1:15). You can have a defiled conscience. Now let me say this about a

conscience: Don't ever say, "Let your conscience be your guide," unless God guides your conscience. You see a conscience—a defiled conscience—can't be your guide. Your conscience can be defiled.

Your conscience is like a sundial; it only operates correctly when true light is shined on it. Now we have a sundial in our garden, but I'd be foolish to get up in the middle of the night with a flashlight, and go out to look at the sundial to see what time it is, because it registers only according to true light to tell you what time it is. Or, your conscience is like a thermostat; it operates where it is set. And so by culture, and by ignorance, your conscience may be set at the wrong setting; and so, therefore, you will approve things that you really ought not to approve. And you say, "Well, my conscience doesn't bother me." But it's possible that your conscience could be defiled. Or, your conscience is like a skylight. We recently had a skylight put in a bathroom to let more light in. Well, that skylight operates only when the light is shining, and the skylight is clear. Now if there's no light shining, or if the window is dirty, then, of course, it doesn't operate as it ought. Your conscience is very much like that. Your conscience is not a light bulb that gives light. Your conscience is a windowpane that operates according to the light that it receives.

And so your conscience can be defiled; and, when your conscience is defiled, then you don't have what Paul told Timothy to have, which is a pure conscience. And so don't always say, "Well, I'm all right. My conscience doesn't bother me."

3. A Seared, or Deadened, Conscience

But not only can you have a defiled conscience; you can have a deadened conscience. First Timothy chapter 4 and verse 2—Paul speaks of some who will be "*speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron*" (1 Timothy 4:2). They can look you straight in the face, and tell a lie—and it can be a religious lie.

And they can tell it so often, it is as though they have taken a white-hot poker and cauterized their conscience. And the very nerve endings are dead, just like if you were to take a branding iron, and place it on your skin, and then that burned place was to heal, and then the scab fall off. You touch that place—you have no feeling there, at all. It's seared with a hot iron. It's cauterized—the nerve endings are dead.

And there are people, sometimes, who not only have a defiled conscience, but they have a deadened conscience. They have so overridden their conscience that it is now dead, and they cannot know right from wrong. They're past feeling. "Oh," you say, "that's the depth of depravity." No. You can go from a dynamic conscience that is operating right, to a defiled conscience, to a deadened conscience, on down the road to a depraved conscience.

4. A Depraved, or Evil, Conscience

What is a depraved conscience? It's an evil conscience. Hebrews chapter 10 and

verse 22 speaks of “*an evil conscience*” (Hebrews 10:22). What is an *evil conscience*? An *evil conscience* is one that approves what is wrong, and disapproves what is right—that’s an evil conscience.

Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 20 says, “*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*” (Isaiah 5:20). We have a generation of people today, who have turned morality around, and upside down on its head. And what God calls *good*, they call *evil*; and, what God calls *evil*, they call *good*. It’s a moral depravity. And we in America have reached the very bottom of the garbage can, where people have gone from a dynamic conscience, to a defiled conscience, to a deadened conscience, to a depraved conscience.

II. The Corruption of the Conscience

Now how does a conscience get corrupted? We’ve talked about the conscience and its characteristics. What about the conscience and its corruption? Because, Paul said, “Be careful to maintain a good conscience, because if you don’t, you’re going to have a wreck; your guidance system—your warning light—is going to malfunction; and, you’re going to end up on the mountainside, shipwrecked on the rocks somewhere” (1 Timothy 1:19).

We have, in today’s society, lost our corporate conscience. Individually, we’re to have a conscience, and society’s to have a conscience. Sin has never been more outrageous than it is today, in this age. Drugs, prostitution, pornography, sexual perversion, crime—these things are epidemic. And have you noticed the criminals are getting younger, and they are getting bolder? Have you noticed that? Younger and bolder. We don’t have enough prisons to warehouse them anymore.

Dr. John MacArthur speaks of John Vernon. John Vernon, who was the former Assistant Police Chief of Los Angeles, said that, out there, he’s dealing with people that he calls *moral flatliners*. Do you know what a *flatliner* is? When they hook you up in the hospital, that little thing that measures your heartbeat—*beep beep, beep beep*—but then, if it goes *mmmmm*, that means your heart’s not beating anymore. He calls these *moral flatliners*. He said, “Let me illustrate what I’m talking about.” We don’t have enough room to warehouse the criminals, but even the grossest sin is never described for what it is: a transgression against a righteous and a holy God.

He said, “Let me illustrate what I’m talking about.” And he told about a gang member out there, in Los Angeles, who had adopted the name—he called himself *Cool Aid*. And what *Cool Aid* did was, when there was a parade, a school parade, and some of the homecoming queens were on a float, *Cool Aid*, in a crowd, took a gun, and began to fire at those homecoming queens, wounding them—one of them critically. I mean, it was wide-open; they put the finger on him. They arrested him; they brought him in to

interrogate *Cool Aid*, and they asked him why did he do such a thing—what was his motive? Do you know what he said? He said, “Well, I need to go to prison.” “Well, why do you want to go to prison?” He said, “Well,” he said, “I need some medical work.” He said, “I have a venereal disease I need to get treatment for. So in prison, I’ll get treatment.” He said, “Also, I have some dental work that I need to have done. And if I go to prison, they’ll pay to do my dental work. And,” he also said, “I need to get buffed out...”—what he meant by that was “I want to go into the weight room, and, you know, build up my body. I need to get buffed out. So,” he said, “I need to go to prison for a while. But,” he said, “before I go, I had to get a *rep*”—*Rep*: a reputation. “So that’s why I did what I did—so I’d have a reputation.” He said, “When I go to prison, I want to be known as *the enforcer*.”

See? That’s a *moral flatliner*. I mean, no thought at all about the girls whose lives are ruined and maimed, and he squeezed the trigger with no compunction, anymore than they would have stepping on a castaway Pepsi Cola can. That’s a *moral flatliner*; that’s a person who has a depraved conscience.

Now folks, it’s frightening to live in a society that way. How do we get that way? Well, go to Romans chapter 1, and look with me, if you would, in Romans chapter 1. We are living in Romans chapter 1, today, and God, friend, is angry with this society. Look, in verse 18: “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven...*”—now, don’t get the idea that God doesn’t have wrath. You say, “Well, God is a God of love.” Yes, and a God of love hates sin—“*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;*”—do you see the word *hold*? The word *hold* literally means “to hold back; to smother; to repress; to refuse the truth.” It is not that they don’t know the truth, not that they hadn’t heard the truth. They hid the truth; they smother the truth; and they repress the truth. Why?—“*because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them*” (Romans 1:18–19).

Two ways that every man knows that God exists: It’s in him and under him. In him—that’s his conscience; under him—that’s creation. Creation and conscience—they are two witnesses that witness to every man about God. Verse 20 explains that, “*For the invisible things of him*”—of God—“*from the creation of the world are clearly seen*” (Romans 1:20).

*My Father is omnipotent,
And that you can’t deny;
A God of might and miracles,
It’s written in the sky.*
—JOHN W. PETERSON

“Being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead;

so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20). You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to understand this. I mean, God exists. That’s so obvious. A man is a fool to deny God. That’s the reason the Bible says, *“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God”* (Psalm 14:1). There’s no convoluted argument for the existence of God in the Bible. How much material does God give to atheism? One-half of one verse: *“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”*

Now notice verse 21: *“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”* Rather than being thankful, they became vain. And then, light refused increases darkness. *“Their foolish heart”—the conscience—is “darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,”—that’s a sophisticated fool—“and [they] changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like the corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things”* (Romans 1:21–23).

You say, “Well, at least we don’t do that any more.” Where have you been? Wake up. Smell the coffee. That’s exactly what we’re doing. This is the generation that worships Mother Earth rather than Father God. That’s exactly what he’s talking about. You’re worshipping the creation more than the creature.

A. Sexual Perversion

Now verse 24: *“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves...”*—now, what happens is that, when they have this willful denial of Almighty God, they begin to self-destruct. And how do they do it? Well, they become sexually perverted—*“God...gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:”—these—“who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator”* (Romans 1:24–25).

Well, listen. When you serve the creature more than the Creator, what’s going to happen? You teach children they came from animals—they’re going to begin to act like animals: *“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet”* (Romans 1:26–27)—or fitting. Every kick has a kickback. God says it’s there. You’re doing it; it is wrong, and you reap the results of that. And God calls it *vile affections*. They become sexually perverted.

B. Social Perversion

But not only do they become sexually perverted—continue to read—they become socially perverted. Verse 28: *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their*

knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind,”—do you know what a *reprobate mind* is? That, friend, is a depraved conscience—*“to do those things which are not convenient;”—not fitting—“being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful”* (Romans 1:28–31). For further information, read any newspaper. It’s there—it’s there. They become sexually perverted. They become socially perverted.

C. Spiritual Perversion

And they become spiritually perverted. Look at verse number 32: *“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them”* (Romans 1:32). We have a generation today that takes its pleasure in these things. You check out at the grocery store—look at the tabloids. They literally glorify rape, murder, incest, bestiality, sodomy, homosexuality, pride, arrogance, greed, indolence, and lasciviousness. Those are the headlines. That’s what sells the papers. Not only do they do these things, they take pleasure in those that do them. What is the entertainment today? Can you go and turn on your television and find something that’s not raunchy, filthy, dirty, or depraved? Not only do they do these things—they take pleasure in these that do them. This is where America gets its entertainment. Look at the tee-shirts the kids are wearing today, blatantly—things you would think that they would be ashamed of, with the most vile words, and profanities, and ideas. They boast of their evil. They call evil “good,” and good “evil”; they put light for darkness, and darkness for light; sweet for bitter, and bitter for sweet. They become sexually perverted. They become socially perverted. They become spiritually perverted.

Why? Because, they have put out their own eyes; they have deadened their conscience. It is seared with a hot iron, and then, their conscience is depraved. And they reach the very bottom of the garbage, and they’re ripe for the very judgment of God. And the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against these things. It’s unbelievable, but what has happened is, man has kicked his conscience to death. He said, “Shut up, *gringo!* I don’t want to hear from you.” And folks, we have a society that’s headed for the mountainside.

III. The Cleansing of Conscience

Now let me talk to you, just for a few moments, about the cleansing of the conscience. We’ve talked to you about the conscience and its characteristics. We’ve talked to you

about the conscience and its corruption. Let me talk to you about the conscience and its cleansing. How is a conscience cleansed?

A. Receive Jesus Christ as Your Personal Savior

Well, first of all, you must receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, because by the Adamic nature, we all have a warped and twisted conscience; it's inbred in us. And without a new birth, you can never follow the dictates of your conscience. But Hebrews chapter 9, verse 14, says this: *"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience"* (Hebrews 9:14). Do you know what the word *purge* means? It means, "to make you clean." The blood of Christ, who gave Himself through the eternal Spirit, the One who died in blood and agony upon that cross, is the One who can take your defiled, depraved, deadened conscience, and He can purge it, and make it clean and pure.

You see, when you get saved, there's something mystical and wonderful that takes place. God says to you, "All of those old sins are gone. You've been washed. You've been cleansed." Second Corinthians 5, verse 17: *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Christians are not nice people; they are *new creatures*. They may be nice, but being nice is not what I'm talking about. They become new. They're born again. And God just takes all of that old stuff out, and God washes them. And there is a divine detergent.

*Be of sin the double cure;
Save from wrath and make me pure.*

—AUGUSTUS TOPLADY

B. Keep Your Heart Clean

Now once God does that, and once you get saved, then suppose you, as a Christian, fall back into sin, and you lose that purity of conscience—then how do you get your conscience clean? Well, the Bible says, in the Book of Proverbs, chapter 28 and verse 13: *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy"* (Proverbs 28:13). God says, "If you take any sin in your life, and you cover it up, you're headed toward shipwreck; you'll not prosper. But if you confess and forsake them, you will have mercy." Now what He's saying is that, what you cover, God will uncover; but what you uncover, God will cover. What you uncover, God will cover. When you confess and forsake it, you will have mercy. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9).

Now you need to keep a short account with God. Yesterday, I was trying to make a deadline to get a book in the mail. I had to go down to Fed Ex and mail it, and Joyce was doing some work in the bedroom. She said, "Adrian, could you come in here, for a minute?" Well, I really didn't want to come in, and I was working. But I'm an obedient

husband, so I went in there. And it was something she wanted to know. And I was gruff with her, and went back and sat down to write a spiritual book. And you know what God the Holy Spirit said to me? My conscience said, “Adrian, you were rude and crude to Joyce. Go tell her you’re sorry.” My pride said, “Don’t do it.” The Holy Spirit said, “Do it.” You know, I went, and I said, “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have spoken to you that way. I’m sorry. Forgive me?” Of course she did, and the joy began to come, again, in my heart and my life. I could sit down and do what I ought to do. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins”* (1 John 1:9).

C. Make Restitution

Now not only do you need to get saved and keep your heart clean; but, friend, if you were to have a good conscience, you need to make restitution, when restitution is due. Matthew chapter 5, verse 23: *“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift”* (Matthew 5:23–24). Don’t come to church on Sunday morning, if you know that you have sinned against somebody else, and you refuse to make it right—and you come, and sit here, and sing, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty,” and offer your gifts to God; but you’ve wronged somebody, and you’ve not made restitution, you’ve not made it right. No, you’ll never ever really make it right. But you need to do the best you can to make it right.

Numbers chapter 5, verses 6 and 7: *“Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or a woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD, and that person be guilty; then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed”* (Numbers 5:6–7). That’s why Zacchaeus said, “Lord, if I’ve wronged any man by false accusation, I restore unto him fourfold” (Luke 19:8). You want to have a clean conscience? Is there somebody you’ve wronged? Make restitution. Go to that individual; confess; ask them to forgive you—not only to be right with your Father, but to be right with your neighbor.

When I was a boy, we had a woman who rented a room in our house. She was related to my mother. She was a very nice lady. One day, when she was gone, I went into her room. I was a little fellow; I don’t think I’d started school yet. But I went into her room, and she had some old coins, some pennies—Indianhead pennies. When I saw them, I wanted them, and I took them.

Years later, Jesus saved me, and God called me to preach. And one day, I was praying, and the Lord said, “Adrian, remember the pennies you stole? What have you ever done about that?” “Well, Lord, that was a long time ago. That’s before I got saved.

You forgave me.” He said, “Yeah, but have you made restitution? Have you told her? Have you asked for forgiveness?” I said, “Lord, Lord, I can’t do that. I’m a preacher. I don’t want her to know I’m a penny thief. I can’t do that.” And the Holy Spirit said, “Yes, you can, and you will.” And I had to sit down, and write a letter, and say, “Vera, I stole from you, and I don’t know what it was worth, but I know what it was more valuable to you than to me. But here’s enough money, I hope, that it will cover that. And I’ve asked God to forgive me, and I want you to forgive me.” You know, that was hard to do. But I can’t tell you what joy it brought to me.

You know, it’s so wonderful to know that no one’s going to ever open a door, and point a finger—just to be void of offense toward God, and toward man. Folks, when you live that way, what a freedom that is! God wants you to be free, and God wants you to be clear, and to say, when trials come, with the Apostle Paul, “Hey, have at it! I’m void of offense toward God, and I’m void of offense toward man” (Acts 24:16). When you get in the war, war with a pure conscience. His strength was as the strength of ten, because his heart was pure.

Conclusion

Let’s pray. Remember, it begins with getting saved—truly saved. The blood of Jesus can purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Jesus died for you, and if you’ll pray and ask Him to save you, today, the Jesus that saved me is the Jesus who will save you. He’ll save you for good. He’ll save you for certain. He’ll save you for sure. He’ll save you forever, if you’ll pray and ask Him to come into your heart, and truly trust Him.

You’re not saved by good works. You’re not saved by good conscience. You’re saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Would you pray a prayer like this: “God, thank You for loving me so much. Thank You, Lord, that You have a wonderful plan for my life. And Lord, I’m a sinner, and I need to be saved. Jesus, I believe You’re the Son of God. I believe You paid for my sins with Your blood. I believe that God raised You from the dead; and now, by repentance and faith, I trust You. I trust You only. I trust You always, as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart; forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus.” Would you pray that from your heart? “Save me.” Pray it from your heart: “Save me, Lord Jesus.”

Did you ask Him sincerely? Then, just by faith, pray this way: “Thank You for doing it. Thank You for doing it, because You promised. It is Your gift. I don’t ask for a sign, and I don’t look for a feeling. I stand upon Your Word and Your promise. You are now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my friend. And now Lord Jesus, because You died for me, I will live for You; and, I will confess You openly and publicly. I will not be ashamed of You, because You died for me. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

How to Have a Clean Conscience

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 6, 2005

Main Scripture Text: 1 Timothy 1:19

“Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.”

1 TIMOTHY 1:19

Outline

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Introduction

Find in your Bibles 1 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 19. I want to talk to you about a conscience—yours! I want to talk to you tonight about how to have a good conscience, a clear conscience. A little boy said, “Conscience is that which feels bad when everything else feels good.” Well, that’s whimsical, but it’s not true. A conscience is that that feels good when everything is right. I tell you, there’s nothing that can compare with a clear conscience—when you know that you know that all is right between you and God and your fellow man. And so, I want to talk to you tonight about a clear conscience.

Now look, if you will, in this scripture—and verse 19: the Bible says we’re to be *“holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck”* (1 Timothy 1:19). Now, when you turn away and don’t believe God, don’t take God at His word, you’re headed for a shipwreck.

When I was a youngster, my brother and I had a little boat. It was literally a kayak, but it had a square stern where you could put an outboard motor. And, we had an ancient three-and-a-half horsepower alternated firing Johnson outboard motor. And, it

was made back, I think, just after the days of Noah. And, that little boat weighed forty pounds. It had aluminum ribs and struts, and it was covered with canvas. And, we spent many a day out on Lake Worth there, the big saltwater lagoon, in West Palm Beach, with our little boat. We loved to fish for mackerel and troll for mackerel. It was cold for Florida right after Thanksgiving, but we heard the mackerel were running. We got our little boat. We could carry it overhead, right down to the lake. We put it in, started the motor, and got out in Lake Worth, and trolled and trolled—but no mackerel.

My brother, who is now an engineer—and a good one, by the way—who is in R&D and has recently retired—actually, my brother has some instruments on the space shuttle that he created—and my brother, the thinker, said, “We need to go out into the ocean.” Now, there were small craft warnings. Now, “small craft warnings” means you don’t go out in the ocean, and the commercial boats were coming in—what we call “sea skives,” these great boats that the fisherman would fish out of. But, my brother said, “Yes, but the reason they are in danger is because they’re big boats. We are a little boat, so a little boat floats easier.” You get the logic? And so, out the Palm Beach Inlet we went.

Mountainous waves: We would chug up one wave and go down another, and put one and go down another. And, we went past that big old buoy. I can see it now, leaning. We went right past it. The waves were all around us. And, I said, “Buddy, we’re going out too far. We’d better turn.” But, that was a mistake also, because we turned, and we got sideways to the waves. I was wearing an overcoat—it was *that* cold. But, I looked up, and it was a strange thing, because I saw this green-blue wave, way up there, and I could see the sunlight coming through it. And then, that wave just collapsed and poured into our boat. It was icy. That old outboard was going kaput. The boat filled with water and turned over. I knew I couldn’t swim in an overcoat. I took the coat off; it went to the bottom. The fishing tackle went to the bottom. Our life preservers, such as they were—something...a little pillow we would sit on—were swept away by the ferocity of the waves. Buddy and I were out there, a good way from the shore, in this little boat. And, the boat was not supposed to float. It had no floatation. It wasn’t made of wood, but it caught some air. And, we clung to it, gave a kick, a push, shivering, finally got the boat, to the shore, where it was destroyed in the surf. And, the motor was destroyed. And, we borrowed a match from a fisherman and started a fire there, shivering.

Now, you know, what was wrong with that whole scenario is our father had told us positively, absolutely, “Do not go in the ocean.” Now, he wasn’t talking about bad days; he was talking about good days, but we didn’t believe—we didn’t listen. And, the Bible says—look at this verse again—about faith, the Bible says, “*Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck*” (1 Timothy 1:19).

Do you want to have a shipwreck? Do you want to sink your boat? Then, turn from the Word of God and go your own way. Conscience is not a bad thing; conscience is a good thing.

In 1984, an Avianca airliner was flying in Spain. And, the pilot and the co-pilot were there, and they got a message. The computerized guidance on that airplane began to speak to them in a synthesized voice. It said, “Pull up. Pull up. Pull up. Pull up.” They were headed into danger. Later, after the wreck, they found the black box, and they heard what went on in that cockpit. And, when that voice was saying, “Pull up. Pull up. Pull up,” one of those pilots said, “Shut up, Gringo,” and flipped the switch. He thought it was a malfunction. That airplane plowed into the side of that mountain, and everybody on board was killed. Now, your conscience is very much like that: your conscience is warning you and telling you when to pull up. Your conscience is telling you when not to go out into the ocean.

Now, you can kick your conscience to death if you want to, but friend, a conscience is a gift of God. So, I want to talk to you about the gift of a conscience.

I. The Gift of a Good Conscience

And, first of all, I want to talk to you about the gift of a good conscience. Now, the Bible says here that we’re to hold faith and a good conscience (1 Timothy 1:19). Now, your conscience is not an enemy; it is a gift of God given to protect you, to help you, to bless you. Animals do not have a conscience. Animals never blush. Man has a conscience. Unlike animals, a man can contemplate his actions and can make moral judgments.

Even the unsaved have a conscience. Put this verse down—Romans 2, verses 14 and 15: *“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law”—that is, “the Word of God and God’s rules”—“are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another”* (Romans 2:14–15). Even a heathen in the deepest darkness has a God-given conscience, and it is a gift of God.

Now, the Hebrew word that is most often translated *heart* literally means “conscience.” Next is chapter 8 and verse 15. Pharaoh hardened his heart, which means he stifled his conscience. Listen to this: *“But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said”* (Exodus 8:15). Now, what did Pharaoh do that brought the judgments and the plagues upon Pharaoh? He stifled his conscience. And so, there is the gift of a clear conscience. Thank God if you have a clear conscience.

You know, I had to examine my own conscience tonight before I could preach this message, and I had to ask myself seriously, look myself in the face, and say, “Adrian,

do you have a clear conscience?” Now, what was the answer? Yes! All right.

II. The Guilt of a Corrupted Conscience

I want you to notice, secondly, not only the gift of a clear conscience, but I want you to notice the guilt of a corrupted conscience, because, again, look at our verse, 1 Timothy 1, verse 19: *“Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck”* (1 Timothy 1:19).

Now, there are several kinds of conscience mentioned in the Bible.

A. A Good Conscience

The first one we’ve already referred to, and that is a good conscience. That is one that has made everything right with God and with our fellows, those that we know and love. Oh, dear friend, how wonderful that good conscience is!

Put this verse down: Acts 24, verse 16. Paul said (and he is testifying), *“And herein do I exercise myself, to always have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men”* (Acts 24:16). Paul said, “I exercise myself to this. I work at this. I want to have a conscience always void...or a conscience, he says here, that is right with man and right with God, *“void of offence toward God, and toward men”* (Acts 24:16).

Bill Gothard is a personal friend that I have, and Bill Gothard said this about conscience, and a clear conscience: he said—and I’m quoting now—“That inner freedom of spirit and assurance from knowing that you have a transparency toward everyone, that no one is able to point a finger at you and accuse you of wrongs toward him that you have never made right”—“transparency.” Is there something in your heart and in your life that you would not like to be made known? I’m not talking about your past; I’m talking about right now. You see, look, persecution comes, troubles come, heartaches come, and if you don’t have a good conscience, it’s very hard to bear these things.

The Apostle Peter knew the same thing, and notice what he said here in 1 Peter 3, verses 13 through 16: *“And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye”*—now, he didn’t say we couldn’t suffer; he just said that suffering can’t harm us. There are people who can hurt us, but they can’t harm us. And so, he says—*“If you suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled”*—that’s what I was trying to say to you, this morning. Satan has no authority over you, no matter how many heartaches—*“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation”*—or,

“behavior”—“*in Christ*” (1 Peter 3:13–16).

Now, evil people will try to harm you because you’re a follower of Jesus. Again, I want to say they can hurt you, but they can’t harm you. And, if you suffer for righteousness’ sake, praise God! You just have to ask yourself this question: Is my heart right? Is my heart void of offense toward God and toward man? If it is, friend, don’t let the persecution of this world or trouble get beneath your skin.

I have served three times as President of the Southern Baptist Convention when we were going through a theological battle. I got some slings and some arrows. I had some bad things said about me, but you know what? And, I testify to the glory of God: Never, ever, did any of those things, so far as I know, get beneath my skin. Never did they bother me, cause me an upset stomach, cause me a sleepless night, or put resentment in my heart. Do you know why? I had a good conscience. You say, “Oh, well, aren’t you something?” No, I’m just a Christian with a good conscience. That’s it!!

I mean, you see, look, people are going to say things about you, and you don’t always go around defending yourself. You give an answer when they ask of the hope that’s in you. But, he says this: “that...they may be ashamed that falsely accuse you for your behavior in Christ” (1 Peter 3:16). When trouble comes, believe you me—you’re going to need a good conscience. A good conscience removes fear. A bad conscience causes fear. Adam and Eve had a bad conscience. And so, when God came walking in the midst of the garden, they hid themselves. They didn’t want to face God. Do you know why many people won’t come to church? Bad conscience: They don’t want to face God. They don’t want to hear the Word of God because there’s something about an individual that makes him want to get away from God and away from the things of God when he or she has a bad conscience. A good conscience will do more good for you than a sleeping pill. No flattery, no good things that people say about you can heal a bad conscience, and no criticism can harm you if you have a good conscience. Now, there is a good conscience.

B. **A Defiled Conscience**

But now, number two: There is a defiled conscience. Look, if you will, in Titus 1, verse 15: “*Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure*”—now, listen to this—“*but even their mind and conscience is defiled*” (Titus 1:15). Doubtless, I’m speaking tonight to some in this building and some who are listening by radio, who have a defiled conscience. You see, *you can’t let your conscience be your guide unless God guides your conscience.*

Your conscience is like a sundial. An artificial light can make it give a wrong reading. You wouldn’t look at a sundial with a flashlight and try to find out what time it is. Your conscience is like a thermometer—excuse me, like a thermostat: it operates where it is

set. A headhunter, a pagan—he has his conscience set here; and so, he doesn't feel any remorse about taking someone's head off. His conscience would smite him if he didn't tell his brother how to do it because that's where his conscience is set. You see, your conscience is not like a light bulb; it's like a skylight, and it's what lets the light in. But, if the skylight is dirty, if it is defiled, then the light doesn't get through; or if it's covered, the light does not get through. You can have a defiled conscience. Sometimes, a man will say, "Well, my conscience doesn't bother me." Well, maybe his conscience is defiled.

C. **A Seared Conscience**

But, not only can you have a good conscience (which you ought to have), and a defiled conscience; you can go worse than that and have a seared conscience. Listen to 1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 2: Paul is talking about the ungodly, and he says, "They speak lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:2).

Have you ever seen a doctor cauterize something? You know, you can take a hot iron, put it on human skin, and so burn it that you destroy the nerve endings. It is cauterized. At that point, it feels no pain. Now, a person with a seared conscience is that way: they have destroyed their ability to tell right from wrong; their conscience is seared.

Did you notice in the trial of Scott Peterson—did you notice him sitting there? Who, evidently, a man adjudicated guilty, and I suppose he did—as a matter of fact, I sincerely think he did—murder his wife and his little baby. But, he sat there in the courtroom with his chin out, his head up, rather than saying, "O God, have mercy upon me for what I did!" For some reason, his conscience was defiled—and worse than that, it was seared.

The Indians used to say that your conscience is like a triangle. It's in your breast. And, if you do bad, the triangle turns, and the corners hurt. But, if you do bad long enough, the corners wear off and you don't feel it anymore.

D. **An Evil Conscience**

There is a defiled conscience. But, it can even get worse: there is an evil conscience. Hebrews 10, verse 22: "*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience*" (Hebrews 10:22). What is an evil conscience? That's the final state of evil. An evil conscience is where one disapproves of good and approves evil. And, by the way, friend, we're living in the generation of the evil conscience. Put in your margin "Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 20": "*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*" (Isaiah 5:20). Today, in our society, good is called "evil."

When I was a kid, *square* was a good word. You talk about a "square meal." We

talked about a “square deal.” We talked about a city “foursquare.” But today, *square* is square. Why, if you’re “square,” you’re odd. You’re a do-gooder, and people look down upon you and will ridicule you for what you do because they will call your good “evil,” and they will call their evil “good.” We’ve lost our moorings today. We live in a society that approves evil. Drugs, and prostitution, and pornography, and sexual perversion are an epidemic in our streets, and people cannot see gross wickedness for what it is. In this very city of ours, some of our political leaders have admitted to sexual immorality. What do people say? “So? Everybody does it. That’s none of our business.” May Heaven help us—may Heaven help us—when those who are supposed to lead us set that kind of a standard here in our society!

Check out of the grocery store—and I’ve been to a grocery store once or twice a year—check out and look at the tabloids that are there, just before you check out. The headlines—they scream of sexual perversion, adultery, gluttony, extravagance, arrogance, selfishness, drunkenness, immorality, and vice. The Bible speaks of those who not only do those things, *“but have pleasure in them that do them”* (Romans 1:32). People today—kids and adults alike—are wearing T-shirts with filth, and perversion, and blasphemy on their T-shirts. Bumper stickers—obscene and ungodly. Now, why would one put on his T-shirt obscenities? Because he approves of them. He says, “Look at me.” Why would one put an obscenity of blasphemy as a bumper sticker? Because, friend, they have a defiled conscience; they have an evil conscience, where they approve of evil and disapprove of God. And, when that happens, a society is on its last legs, when we entertain ourselves by watching these things. And, some wear these things and do these things like a badge of honor.

Now, what happens when a person has an evil conscience? In Romans chapter 1, there are several steps down. I call it the gravity of depravity. God reveals Himself to men. Men turn from God. They kick their conscience to death.

1. Sexual Perversion

And then, step number one: They become sexually perverted. Romans 1, verses 26 and 27: *“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet”* (Romans 1:26–27)—“which was fitting.”

There are those who approve of sodomy today. There are those who actually try to teach it to others. Now, notice he says, *“That which is against nature”* (Romans 1:26). Remember, I told you that even the heathens have a conscience. Everybody who listens to his natural instincts knows that certain things are wrong. And, God left Sodom with its smoking ruins as an example to any generation. Second Peter 2, verse 6: God

turned *“the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, [condemning] them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly”* (2 Peter 2:6). Man, when he kicks his conscience to death, becomes sexually perverted.

2. Social Perversion

And, he becomes socially perverted. Look now in Romans 1, 28 through 31: *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents; Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful”* (Romans 1:28–31). That, my friend, is an evil conscience. It becomes sexually perverted. It becomes socially perverted.

3. Spiritual Perversion

It becomes spiritually perverted. Romans 1, verses 32: *“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them”* (Romans 1:32). You want to get an Academy Award today? Make it vile, lasciviousness, advertise it as shocking, and people will applaud you, applauding sin, laughing our way into Hell.

What does God do with a person who has an evil conscience when he reaches this lowest state? It's very frightening. I'll tell you what God does: He leaves them alone—He leaves them alone. You say, “My conscience doesn't bother me, and God doesn't bother me.” Sad, indeed.

Put these scriptures down. Romans 1:24: *“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.”* They say, “This is my lifestyle.” God says, “All right, you can have it.” God gave them up. And then, in Romans chapter 1, verse 26: *“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature”* (Romans 1:26). Again, God gave them up. And then, listen to Romans chapter 1, verse 28: *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient”* (Romans 1:28). God gave them up. God gave them up. God gave them over. When a man forsakes God, that's a terrible thing; but when God forsakes man, that is tragic. God says, “All right, have your way.” Pity, I say—pity—the man who has kicked his conscience to death.

III. The Grace of a Cleansed Conscience

Third and finally, I want you to see not only the gift of a clear conscience, and the guilt

of a corrupted conscience, but oh, I'm so glad I can talk to you about the grace of a cleansed conscience—the grace of a cleansed conscience.

Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 14: *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”* (Hebrews 9:14). Do you know what the word *purge* means? It means “to make your conscience clear.” The grace of God and the Spirit of God, through the blood of Christ, can cleanse you and communicate to your conscience that there is nothing—nothing—between you and God—not because you're good, but because God is good, because of the grace of God. And friend, then the Holy Spirit says to you, “It is gone. It is forgotten. That's in the past.” *“[But] if any man be in Christ [Jesus], he is a new [creation]: old things are passed away...all things are made new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Would you like to have, tonight, a cleansed conscience? Two simple rules. They are found in Acts 24, verse 16. I told you before what Paul said when he faced trouble. Listen: *“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men”* (Acts 24:16). You want to have that kind of a conscience? Receive Christ as your personal Savior, because this will only work if you're a child of God. Receive Christ as your personal Savior; and then, confess and forsake every known sin. You're not going to have a clear conscience as you hold on to your sin. I don't care what it is—if you're into Internet pornography; if you're into dishonesty; if you harbor, in your heart, hatred toward somebody; if your life is filled with lust, or blasphemy, or whatever it is, forsake it. *“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy”* (Proverbs 28:13). Now, you just can't override it; you have to get rid of it.

Have you ever been in a swimming pool and tried to hold a beach ball down under the water? How about trying to hold two down? You can do it for a while, but one's going to pop up, or the other one is going to pop up. I'll tell you a way to keep them down: take a pocketknife and let the air out of them. When you confess your sin, you let the air out of it. You don't have to keep trying to submerge it. Get totally right with God; and then, get totally right with others, *“void of offence toward God, and toward men”* (Acts 24:16).

Is there any thing between you and any individual that you've not made right, at least endeavored to make right? Jesus said, “When you come to church, and you're getting ready to make your offering, and you know there that your brother has ought against you, leave there your offering, and go and make it right with your brother; and then, come and make your offering” (Matthew 5:23–24). You can't bribe God with a big gift if there's malice in your heart. Get right with God. Get right with others.

When I was a kid, we had a roomer that stayed in our home. She was my mother's

cousin, a single lady. She stayed in an upstairs bedroom. One day, when she was gone, I went up into her bedroom, opened one of the dresser drawers, and there were some Indian head pennies, and that fascinated me. They were not mine, but I took them. The years passed. God saved me. God called me to preach. And, God reminded me of those pennies that I had taken. One of the hardest things on earth that I had to do was to write to my mother's cousin and say, "Vera, when I was a child, I took something of yours that didn't belong to me, and I'm so sorry. Please forgive me." You say, "That was a small thing." I tell you, I wanted my heart to be clean. I wanted my conscience to be clear—even if she never found out about it, and she never did until I wrote her. It's hard for a preacher to write a letter like that. And, if I'd been somebody else, that would have been one thing, but to be a preacher that she looked up to and was so proud of!

But, what am I talking about? If you want a clear conscience, "void of offense toward God, and void of offense toward man" (Acts 24:16), confess, make restitution where you can and where you cannot. Ask God to have mercy. And then, my friend, you can walk and talk, sing and whistle, with a clear conscience. There are times when I have to get alone with God in my study by myself, and take an inventory, and one by one by one by one, check on the things in my life—make certain there's no un-confessed, un-repent-ed-of sin in my life, nothing that I need to make restitution about, or confession about, to someone else. And then, I ask, "Lord, is there any thing that I withhold from You? Is there any thing that I think I own that I would not give to You if You asked for it?" And, when I say, "No, there's nothing that I've not confessed; there's nothing that I've not endeavored to make restitution for; and Lord, there's nothing I think I own that You can't have if You want it"—when I do that, my body is full of light. The Bible says, "If your eye is single, your body is full of light" (Matthew 6:22; Luke 11:34). Oh, the blessings of a good conscience "*void [of] offence toward God, and toward men*" (Acts 24:16)!

Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. Now, you know, when we take the Lord's Supper, we're to take the Lord's Supper with a conscience void of offense. The Bible says, "*Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat*" (1 Corinthians 11:28). We'll spend just a moment, now. You examine your heart. You say, "Pastor, there are some things I need to make restitution about, and I can't do it sitting here." Well, just say to God, "God, I will do it. Count it as done—count it as done—and I will do it." "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us*" (1 John 1:9). "*He that covereth his sin shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy*" (Proverbs 28:13). We'll wait just a moment in quietness; and then, we will come to the Lord's Table.

Evolution: Fact or Fiction

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 24, 1996

Main Scripture Text: 1 Timothy 6:20–21

“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith.”

1 TIMOTHY 6:20–21

Outline

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Introduction

And, indeed, that’s what we need—the mind of Christ, and we’re going to seek that, this morning, as we turn to God’s Word. And, I’d like for you to find 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 20. When you’ve found it, would you please look up here? First Timothy chapter 6 and verse 20.

I’ve been reading the newspapers lately about what is happening in the State House in Nashville concerning whether or not evolution ought to be taught in our public schools as a fact or should it be taught merely as an unproven theory. I noticed that the newspaper seems to be a little titillated about this, and they take great joy in calling this legislation the (quote) “Monkey Bill.” And, that seems to make it a little humorous, and it seems to trivialize it a little bit. And, here’s this last week’s newspaper: “Nashville—The legislation requiring the teaching of evolution as a theory rather than a scientific fact in Tennessee public schools will return to the Senate floor as early as next week after its resurrection by a committee Wednesday.” And then, skipping some material: “The bill was amended by the committee to say the teachers who failed to use the theory disclaimer may be subject to sanctions, including firing, but it is up to local school

boards whether to impose any sanctions at all. The bill originally said teachers who failed to comply shall be dismissed”—that is, teachers who teach evolution as a proven fact. And then, the newspaper goes on to say—“The so-called ‘Monkey Bill’ attracted another standing-room-only crowd during the committee debate. A delegation of high school students delivered petitions against the bill, and half a dozen TV crews, including the BBC”—that is, they’ve come all the way over from Britain—“roamed the aisles for the best camera angles, giving the hearing a circus-like atmosphere.” And then, it talks about the man who suggested this bill, Burkes, a Putnam County farmer, known in the legislature for his integrity and sincerity, assured the committee that he filed the bill out of a heartfelt concern that children whom the state forces to attend school do not have their religious views trampled on by the state. This legislation is very simple, and he goes on to say, “It does not hurt academic freedom. It does not intimidate any teacher. It simply requires a disclaimer. I know the bill has been controversial to some, but I don’t see it as that. I didn’t mean for it to be anything of the sort,” he said. But, before the 30-minute hearing was over, Nicholas Copernicus, Santa Claus, and the Easter Bunny had been thrown into the issue.

That’s a very interesting article, and ’course you’ve been reading, as I’ve been reading, about what is happening. And, I want to talk to you today on that subject: “Evolution: Fact or Fiction?” And, I’d like to do it in an intelligent manner, and I hope you’ll give me the courtesy of listening in the same way. And, I wanna speak, and you listen—and don’t you get finished before I do. And, we may get a little convoluted this morning, but I want you to listen as we talk about this subject: “Evolution: Fact or Fiction?”

You see, really, if you were to reduce all of the questions in the world down to one question, it would simply be this: Did God make man, or did man make God? Is man the special creation of Almighty God, or is God in the figment and the imagination of man? Now, look at our verse—1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 20: “*O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen*” (1 Timothy 6:20–21).

Now, what are we talking about when we talk about Darwinian evolution? Oh, what is this? Well, let me tell you what is out there, in the air today, what our students are subjected to day by day, and what is found in almost all of our libraries. *Time* magazine, part of the *Time-Life* book series, has this advertisement. Actually, the series is called “The Emergence of Man”—“The Emergence of Man”—and this series is found in almost all public libraries, in almost all high school, and junior high school, and elementary schools across America. Let me read from that ad. Let me just show you what children are being taught. (And, what this is, is only typical; this is not universal, but I would say it

is very typical.) I'm reading, now, from the *Time-Life* book series "The Emergence of Man"—quote: "Today that creature who first began to raise himself above other animals no longer exists. He is become you—unique, set apart from the two million other species living on the planet by a thumb that makes your hand the precision tool, by a knee that locks you into a comfortable upright position, and by your capacity for abstract thought and speech"—now, that's what makes you different, boys and girls: your thumb, your knee, and the ability to think abstractly; that's what makes you a significant other from an animal—"All this and more has enabled your species to dominate the earth, and yet you share with every other creature that ever lived the same origin, the same accident, that led to the spontaneous generation of the first-celled slimy algae three-and-one-half billion years ago." Now, notice no stutter, no stammer, no equivocation. This is it, kids. Thank God for your thumb. Thank God for your knee. Thank God that you can think abstractly, because that's all that separates you from everything else that came from slime.

And, they know exactly when it happened. They can give you the date: it happened one-and-a-half billion years ago. Now, if that is true—just right away, if that is true—think what that says—number one—about the value of human life. You're not made in the image of God. You are simply a creature of accident. What does that have to say about morality? If there is no Creator, there's no fixed standard of right or wrong. And, therefore, if you are an accident, simply akin to other living creatures, and if there's no fixed standard of right or wrong, what does that say about the meaning of life and the purpose of life?

Well, let's go back to this article again. They ask, "How did it all happen? What was the evolutionary process that led man to his conquest of a harsh and hostile environment?" They didn't say, "Could it have been by evolution?" They say, "What was the evolutionary process?" And then, they go on to say, "You find the amazing story in *Time-Life* book's new series, 'The Emergence of Man.' Your introductory volume, 'The Missing Link,' shows the stranger-than-science fiction world of Australopithecus, the ape man. You will feel a sense of immediacy in visual adventure, in incredible, lifelike, pictorial, technical photo painting." And then, they have all these pictures, this lifelike, pictorial, technical photo painting. I want you to understand that's just another way of saying, "The figment of someone's imagination." And, there are the pictures. And, the kids look: "Wow! It must be real! They got pictures!"

Well, what is evolution, anyway? It's a theory made popular by Darwin and first espoused in his famous volume, or espoused there, in his famous volume, *The Origin of the Species*. Now, let me tell you what Darwin himself said, and I'm quoting on page 23: "Analogy would lead me to the belief that all animals and plants are descended from some one prototype. All animals and plants are descended from some one prototype.

All organisms start from a common origin, and from some low and intermediate forms both animals and plants may have been developed. All organic things which have ever lived on the earth may be descended by some one primordial form.” So, what does that mean?

Well, we all started out, somehow, as a speck of protoplasm and green algae, and, ipso facto, everything developed out of that. Now, the prime tool is mutation plus natural selection. *Mutation* means that things just change as they adapt and naturally select themselves out of their environment. So, they believe that, first of all, there were primitive protozoa; that just simply means “original life.” And, somehow, those primitive protozoa became an un-segmented worm. And then, that un-segmented worm evolved into a fish. And then, that fish turned into an amphibian. And, that amphibian turned into a reptile. And then, the reptiles became birds. And then, the birds became mammals. And then, finally, the mammals became men. Now, that’s what you’re supposed to believe—that nothing plus time plus chance equals everything, that time plus chance turns amoebas into astronauts and molecules into monkeys and men.

Now, what it is, folks—it’s a fairy tale for adults. I mean, in the nursery school, we talk about fairy tales where frogs turn into princes, but we call that a “fairy tale.” But, when we carry it into the classroom, it’s the same fairy tale, only now it is for adults. I like Dr. Criswell’s little saying that he uses sometimes:

*“Once I was a tadpole beginning to begin,
And then I was a frog with my tail tucked in.
Then I was a monkey in a banyan tree,
And now I am a professor with a PhD.”*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

And, you just simply go from step to step. I want to tell you why I reject evolution. I want to give you three reasons why I reject evolution, and I want you to think about these reasons. I don’t wanna argue with you, but I do want to state them clearly, hopefully, so that you can understand why many intelligent and well-trained people reject evolution.

I. Logical Reasons

Now, I do reject evolution, first of all, for logical reasons. It is not logical, and many intelligent and well-trained scientists—now, listen, I’m not talking about Baptist preachers, now; I’m talking about intelligent and well-trained scientists—are moving away from evolution because it does not answer the questions.

Dr. Newton Tahmisian, a physiologist for the Atomic Energy Commission, has stated this—and I quote: “Scientists who go about teaching that evolution is a fact of life are great con men, and the story they are telling may be the greatest hoax ever. In

explaining evolution, we do not have one iota of fact.” Now, that’s an Atomic Energy Commission scientist. That’s not Adrian, there. And then, Dr. Etheridge, of the British Museum of Science, which I have recently visited, said this—listen to it: “Nine-tenths of the talk of evolution is sheer nonsense, not founded on observation and wholly unsupported by fact. This museum is full of proofs of the utter falsity of their view.” Again, that’s not some raving religious lunatic who said that. Listen to Dr. Ambrose Fleming. He was president of the Philosophical Society of Great Britain. Here’s what he said: “The evolution theory is purely the product of the imagination.” Again, who is this saying this? These are brilliant men, learned men, men who have been honored.

Dr. Cecil Wakeley, leading British surgeon and the late president of the Royal College of Surgeons, said this: “When I was a medical student, I was taught the theory of evolution, but I never believed it.” Now, this is not a “6” or “7” doctor—this is a number 10 doctor! Swedish embryologist, Soren Lovtrup, wrote this: “I believe that, one day, the Darwinian myth will be ranked the greatest deceit in the history of science. When this happens, many people will pose the question, ‘How did this ever happen?’” Again, we’re not talking, now, about a Bible-thumper; we’re just talking about a scientist who says, “This doesn’t make sense.”

The great scientists have not all been evolutionists. Michael Faraday, which many acclaim as one of the greatest scientists to ever live, was a Bible-believing Christian. Lord Kelvin, Joseph Lister, Lewis Pasteur, Isaac Newton, Kepler, Sir William Ramsey, Lord Frances Bacon, Samuel Morse—these were all creationists. Were they fools? Now, *when a scientist says he believes the Bible, it doesn't give me any more faith in the Bible; it just gives me more faith in the scientist.* I mean, we don’t need science to prop up the Word of God. But, what I am saying to you is that logically, you don’t have to put your brains behind the door to believe in an creation or at least to repudiate evolution. Some have said that Sir Isaac Newton was the greatest scientist of all time. He wrote this: “This most beautiful system of sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the council and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being.”

Now, I said I reject it for logical reasons. Let me give you four bridges that no evolutionist can cross—four things that the evolutionist has no answer to—and, therefore, he should not stand in the school and say, “This is fact.”

A. The Origin of Life

First, the first question the evolutionist has no answer to is simply, folks, the origin of life—the origin of life. From whence is life? Now, they’ve tried to wrestle with this, and one person said, “Well, perhaps the origin of life is some germ came and hit the Earth. It was riding a meteor from outer space.” Well, that just moves the question back to where did it begin? How did it begin in outer space before it came to this earth? But, most push that aside as only pushing the question back. And so, what the evolutionist has to

believe is that life arose by spontaneous generation—that is, that inorganic matter, prebiotic soup, green gum, slime, something, turned into life. It's what they call a "fortuitous concourse of atoms." Now, doesn't that bless you—a "fortuitous concourse of atoms," a flash of lightning through some kind of green scum.

Now, let me tell you something. Here's one of the greatest quotes. I want you to listen carefully, word for word, to what I have to say here, because it's a great quote. We're talking, now, about the first bridge that cannot be logically crossed, and that is the origin of life. And, here's what Dr. George Wald had to say. Now, who was George Wald? Well, he was professor emeritus of biology at Harvard University. Well, you don't get to be professor emeritus at Harvard just by flunking out. Also, he won the Nobel Prize in biology in 1957. So, I would say he is a notable scientist. Now, he wrote something in *Scientific America* that I want you to listen to. He's dealing, now, with the origin of life. He's dealing with the question, "Where—from whence—comes life?" Listen, don't miss this. He says, "There are only two possibilities as to how life arose: one is spontaneous generation arising to evolution; the other is a supernatural, creative act of God. There is no third possibility." I think we'd all say, "You're tracking good, Doctor. That's fine." And then, he says, "Spontaneous generation that life arose from non-living matter was scientifically disproved 120 years ago by Louis Pasteur and others"—he says, "That's a scientific impossibility. We've known that for 120 years." He says—"That leaves us with only one possible conclusion—that life arose as a supernatural, creative act of God"—so far, so good, but don't get too excited yet. I want you to listen to what Dr. Wald goes on to say. Now, he says, "You've got two possibilities: One is spontaneous generation—impossible." He says. "The other—that God did it." Now, concerning the fact that God did it, I want you to listen to what he says—"I will not accept that"—what? Creation. He said—"I will not accept that philosophically, because I do not want to believe in God. Therefore"—listen; listen—"Therefore, I choose to believe in that which I know is scientifically impossible—spontaneous generation arising to evolution." He said, "I don't wanna believe in God, so I'm going to force my mind to believe what I believe is impossible, because I will not believe in God."

But, what I want... I wanna tell you something, folks: evolution is a philosophy. It is a bias. It is the next best guess of the mind that cannot accept God. Even an evolutionist, Sir Arthur Keith, confessed, "The only alternative to some form of evolution is special creation, which is unthinkable." He said, "That's the only alternative—that God... That's unthinkable!" D.N.S. Watson, a scientist, displayed his prejudice when he wrote, "Evolution is a theory universally accepted—not because it can be proved by logical, coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible." He said, "I believe in evolution not because I can prove it, no. I just

cannot believe there's a God who did it all." Folks, you see, it's a philosophy—it's a philosophy. Spontaneous generation—that was believed by ignorant people 2,000 years ago. They would see some refuse, some dung, some carrion, and after a while, they would see maggots come out, and they would say, "Would you see that? Life has arisen spontaneously." They would see some rags that had been wrapping cheese, and after a while, there would be mice there, and they would say, "You see that? That's where life comes from." But then, Pasteur and others said, "No, that's impossible." And, every scientist knows that spontaneous generation is impossible. And, there's no answer—there is no answer—as for the creation of life apart from the act of God.

B. The Fixity of the Species

Now, here's another problem—a logical problem—every evolutionist has, and that is the fixity of the species—the fixity of the species—the idea that one species can become another. Now, what does the Bible have to say? Genesis chapter 1, verses 11 and 12—God says this: *"And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit"*—now, listen to this phrase—*"after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good"* (Genesis 1:11–12). What is the key word there? *"After its kind," "after its kind," "after its kind"* (Genesis 1:12). And, as you read Genesis, this little phrase occurs ten times.

Now, be very careful here. We certainly believe that there can be varieties within species. You can have all kinds of roses. You can have all kinds of felines. You can have all kinds of canines. You can breed and crossbreed, but you cannot turn a cantaloupe into a kitten. You just can't do that. You cannot go from one specie to another.

I heard about a Marine biologist who thought he would take that beautiful shell animal there, on the West Coast, an abalone, and somehow mix that with a crocodile. He even had a name for it. It was gonna be an abodile. But, he turned up with a crock of baloney. You cannot mix these species.

Now, if there were these transitional forms, if these primitive protozoa became un-segmented worms, and these un-segmented worms became fish, and reptiles, and on and on and on, you would expect to find the fossil remains. Now folks, it's not that we don't have fossils. We've got billions of fossils—billions of fossils. In not one will you find a legitimate transitional form—not one. Folks, *they are telling you that we're looking for the missing link. I am telling you, the chain is missing*—the entire chain! When life first appears, it appears. Well, then, what was beneath that? What you have is a tree without a trunk and no limbs! The evolutionist cannot cross this. He's coming up, now, with weird theories, because he had some idea that somehow he would be able to find these

transitional forms. “But,” you say, “Pastor, don’t we see these in *Time-Life* magazine? I mean, don’t we see these half-men, half-apes? I mean, haven’t we seen the pictures? Haven’t we gone to museums? Haven’t we seen the plaster of Paris molds?” Yes, you have seen them. But, you haven’t seen reality. You’ve seen imagination.

The first Scopes trial that took place here, in Tennessee—it’s called the “Monkey Trial”—in Dayton, Tennessee, William Jennings Bryant was versing Clarence Darrow. Clarence Darrow was a brilliant man, and sort of a, I guess, a skeptical lawyer. William Jennings Bryant was a golden-tongued orator and a Bible believer. And, Darrow, trying to prove evolution as a fact, brought up in that court trial the Nebraska Man. And, he asked William Jennings Bryant, “How do you explain Nebraska Man?” Nebraska Man was discovered by a man named Harold Cook. Nebraska Man was said to be one million years old, and there was Clarence Darrow saying to William Jennings Bryant, “There is Nebraska Man. There is your ape man.” Well, what had Mr. Cook discovered? Are you ready for this? A tooth. I said a *tooth!* And, out of a tooth an artist devised a race, both male and female.

As a matter of fact, a creationist visited the University of Nebraska, where they have Nebraska Man on display. He went into their museum, and he said, “Oh!” He said, “This is wonderful.” ’Course, see, it was tongue-in-cheek. There, they had the skull and the skeleton of Nebraska Man, and this man mischievously asked, “Is this the real Nebraska Man or only a replica?” “Oh,” he said, “This is only a replica.” He said, “Well, would you tell me where are the actual bones of Nebraska Man so I may go see the actual bones of Nebraska Man?” He says, “Well, we don’t have the bones. These are plaster of Paris replicas.” He said, “Yes, I understand that. But, what are they replicas of? Where can I go? You must have had the bones in order to make this replica, to make this cast.” And, the curator had to drop his head and say, “Well, all we had was a tooth.” One tooth! And, with a tooth, they made the head, the body; they glued on some hair; and then, they made a whole civilization—out of one tooth!

What about the Java ape-man? Dr. Eugene Dubois found, in Java, the top of a skull, the fragment of a left thighbone, and three teeth. He announced he had found the missing link—750,000 years old. These bones weren’t even found together. They were found over a space of a year, and eminent scientists, 24 of them, were brought together to look. Ten said that they were the bones of an ape. Seven said they were the bones of a man, and seven said they were a missing link—that is, half man and half ape. Later, Dr. Dubois himself had to confess that what he had found were the remains of an ape. But, you go to the museum, and he’s *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, the ape-man who stands up. He’s just an ape. *You know, it’s amazing how man wants to make a monkey of himself, isn’t it?* Amazing!

And, the Piltdown Man... When I was in college, we studied the Piltdown Man as a

fact, because Charles Dawson in Piltdown, England, found, in a gravel pit, a piece of a jaw, two molar teeth, and a piece of a skull. For fifty years, he was known as the Piltdown Man, but later on, it was shown to be a hoax, and even the *Reader's Digest* said, in 1956, "The great Piltdown hoax was an ape only fifty years old. Its teeth had been filed down and artificially colored." Now, I'm telling you this is what the scientists looked at. This is what they studied! It was a hoax played by a student on his professor! A hoax! "Well," you say, "any body can be misled." Yes, but what I'm trying to show you is how easily these great scientists can be misled. What I'm trying to show you is how willingly they are misled.

A leading well-known biologist of the Smithsonian Institute said this: "There is no evidence which would show man developing step-by-step from lower forms of life. There is nothing to show that man was in any way connected with monkeys. He appeared suddenly and substantially in the same form as he is today. There are no such things as missing links. So far as concerns the major groups of animals, the creationists appear to have the best argument. There is not the slightest evidence that any one of the major groups arose from any other." Hey, folks, it's an argument without evidence. There's the fixity of the species.

C. **The Second Law of Thermodynamics**

Now, here's a third bridge which they can't cross. The first one is the beginning of life. The second is the fixity of the species. The third one is the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Now, what is the Second Law of Thermodynamics? The Second Law of Thermodynamics is this: that energy can never be destroyed, but it continually becomes less available for further work as it unravels. In plain English, everything tends to wear out and to run down. Have you found that out? Sure. I mean, everything tends to wear out and run down. A garden? Leave a garden by itself—is it gonna get to be a better garden? Of course not. Your body... Man, I found myself just yesterday walking a couple of miles and last night rowing on some crazy thing. Why? I'll tell you why: because, friend, the Second Law of Thermodynamics has got me. Your car—you drive your car out into the woods, and leave it out there, and just park it. And, I'll tell you what'll happen: the Second Law of Thermodynamics will begin to work on that car, and the mossy fingers of time and rust will begin to work on that thing, and it will disintegrate. Or, just go take a look in your boy's bedroom if you don't believe this.

What I'm telling you is that everything is marked by death, and decay, and disintegration. Why would a God who created everything make it that way? Because of sin. The Bible says in Romans 8, verse 22, "*We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now*" (Romans 8:22). There's a curse upon creation, and it tends to wind down. The evolutionist, however, has to say that things get more complex, things move toward precision. Given enough time, disorganized things

become organized. Frankly, that doesn't make sense.

If you were to take a 747, and load in the cargo bay the parts of a Cadillac automobile, and climb to 5,000 feet, and shove them out, would you think that they would assemble themselves into a car by the time they hit the ground? "Well," the evolutionist says, "of course not. You need more time. You need more time! You need more time!" Okay, let's take the airplane up to 20,000 feet and then shove them out—then are they gonna be more assembled? They're gonna be less assembled than ever. You see, the longer it goes, the more disintegration you have.

D. Certain Properties That Exist Have Nothing to Do with Survival of the Fittest

I wish I had more time to talk about that, but let me tell you the fourth bridge that they cannot cross: they cannot explain how certain properties exist that have nothing to do with the survival of the fittest. Where did music come from? What does that have to do with survival of the fittest? Where did love come from? Where did honor and dignity come from? Where, my dear friend, did we get the concept of Almighty God? Where did these things come from? You can't explain those by the survival of the fittest.

II. Moral Reasons

Now, I wanna say I reject it for moral reasons. I'll... Excuse me, I reject it for logical reasons. Let me tell you another reason I reject it: I reject it not only for logical reasons, but I reject it for moral reasons. It's immoral. Folks, let me tell you something: when you tell young people that they are an accident, that they simply happened, what does that do? It takes away dignity; it takes away purpose, and it takes away morality.

Nietzsche and Darwin both hated their fathers. Nietzsche was a sexual pervert. He died of syphilis. He was the one who wrote *Man* and *Superman*. Hitler read Darwin. Hitler read Nietzsche. Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*. Hitler was the one who fired up the gas ovens. Together, Hitler and Stalin, who believed that man is merely an animal, put to death 57 million people. Why? He's an animal! He's disposable. Here's a quote by Darwin that you'll very seldom hear: "At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace the savage races throughout the world. At the same time, the anthropomorphous apes will no doubt be exterminated. The break between man"—and when he says "anthropomorphous apes," he means those people that you meet on the streets. I mean, he's talking about what he considers to be inferior races (what he considers to be, not what I consider to be). He says—"The anthropomorphous apes will no doubt be exterminated. The break between man and his nearest allies will then be wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilized state as we may hope. Even the Caucasian and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of now, between the Negro

or Australian and the gorilla.”

Now, I wonder what our precious black friends would say about Mr. Darwin now. Well, he was the original racist! He is saying that there is a superior race of men, and some others are on their way up, but they haven't arrived where we are today. You can understand why Hitler said, “I have the right to exterminate an inferior race that breeds like vermin.” He's talking about the Jews. You see, if there is no God, if man is an incident, an accident, there can be no Ten Commandments, there is no fixed standard of right and wrong. Therefore, children are sent to school to study values clarification, to make up their own minds what kind of values they—the little animals—have. No wonder we have euthanasia today, and Dr. Kevorkian doing his thing. No wonder we're killing little babies in the womb—and even partially born, today. No wonder sexual perversion is accepted as an alternate lifestyle. Why? Because, we've taught our children that they've come from animals; and now, they've finally begun to live like and act like animals. I reject it for moral reasons.

III. Theological Reasons

Folks, I wanna tell you I reject it for theological reasons. H.G. Wells, who wrote *The Outlines of History*, said this—and he was an evolutionist, I believe—he said, “If all animals and man evolved, then there were no first parents, no Paradise, no Fall, and if there had been no Fall, then the entire historic fabric of Christianity, the story of the first sin and the reason for the atonement, collapses like a house of cards.” You see, listen, if evolution is true, there was no Garden of Eden, there was no original sin, there is no depravity, man is always onward, upward, going up; then, he doesn't need to be born again. He doesn't need a birth from above; he just needs a boost from below. He just needs to get better, and better, and better. And, if Genesis 3 is a myth, John 3 is a farce that says, “You must be born again” (John 3:7). I reject it for theological reasons.

I wish I had more time to talk about this, but may I tell you that there's something behind this whole idea of evolution? Why has it such an emotional issue? Why can we not just simply say, “Yes, you cannot have creation without a Creator. Out of nothing, nothing comes”? Why can we not say that? Listen to Aldus Huxley, a leading humanist, brilliant thinker—brilliantly stupid. Listen to what he said in his book *Ends and Means*, and this'll clear it up: “I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning. For myself, as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality, because it interfered with our sexual freedom. We objected to the political and economic system, because it was unjust. The supporters of these systems claim that in some way they embodied the meaning, a Christian meaning, they insisted, of the world. There was one

admirably simple method of confuting these people and the same time justifying ourselves, in our political and erotic revolt. We could deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever.” That’s what he said. He said, “We didn’t want government, and we did not want morality, so we chose evolution to shut the mouths of those who believe in special creation.”

Conclusion

Time is gone. Listen to me. Young people, you listen to your pastor, today. I’m gonna tell you that you are not an accident; you’re made in the image of God. And, I’m gonna tell you that you are precious to Him—so precious to Him that He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus, to suffer, bleed, and die for you. He was buried; He rose again the third day, and He invites you to come to Him. And, the Bible says, *“If any man be in Christ [Jesus], he is a new [creation]”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Oh, He made the first world. He made it all, but when you’re saved, how wonderful! He made the first world with a word; but when He saves you, He does it with His precious blood. You’re precious to Him. You have dignity. You have a Heavenly Father who loves you and cares for you. And, I stand here to tell you right now that if you do not trust Him as your Lord and Savior, He is still your Creator, and you’ll rise in the judgment to meet Him and to answer.

Family Finances

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 17, 1999

Main Scripture Text: 1 Timothy 6:5–10, 17–19

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”

1 TIMOTHY 6:6–7

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and find 1 Timothy chapter 6. And, when you've found it, look up here at me and let me talk to you a little bit about your family and the finances of your family. I can say without a shadow of a doubt or equivocation that money is a root of all kinds of family problems. “Theirs was a perfect marriage, but for one feminine flaw: he was quick on the deposit, but she was faster on the draw.” Now, that happens many times in marriages. And, sometimes, however, it is not the woman who is the spendthrift; it is the man.

Many families—many families, many of our best families—are in financial bondage. Would you like to take a little test before we get into the Word of God and find out whether or not you are in financial bondage? Just begin to count and see how many of these 11 factors are true in your life.

- Factor number one: Find out whether or not you are charging daily expenditures because of a lack of funds.
- Factor number two: Have you put off paying a bill that is due until the next month?
- Factor number three: Do you borrow to pay fixed expenses such as taxes or insurance?
- Factor number four: Does your annual debt retirement on a long-term debt exceed 20% of your annual income?
- Next: Are you even unaware of how much you owe?
- Next: Are creditors and bill collectors writing you about past-due bills?
- Next: Are you having to take from savings to pay current bills?
- Next: Are you making new loans to pay off old loans?
- Next: Have you even thought about being dishonest concerning money?
- Next: Are you having difficulty returning your tithe to Almighty God?
- Next: Do you and your wife ever argue over money?

Well, let's look in the Word of God here—1 Timothy chapter 6, and I'm going to break into a thought in verse 5: *"Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment"—*boys and girls, that means "food and clothes"—*"let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich"—*that is, "they who determine to be rich"—*"fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows"* (1 Timothy 6:5–10). And then, go down to verse 17: *"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, [which] giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, [and] that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life"* (1 Timothy 6:17–19).

Now, it is the devil's plan to keep families in financial bondage. And, we're going to look right here in the Word of God and find out what God's Word has to say about your money problems. You say, "Pastor, mine is not a money problem; it is a lack-of-money

problem.” Well, whatever kind of a problem it is—it may not be truly a lack of money problem and you think it is. Four words I want to write upon your heart—the word *lack*, the word *lost*, the word *love*, and the word *luxury*. They’re all right here.

I. The Lack of Wealth

First of all, I want us to see something about the lack of wealth—the lack of wealth. And, I want you to learn this: the lack of wealth—the lack of wealth—cannot take away genuine commitment. Look, if you will, in verses 6 through 8 of this passage again: “*But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out*”—now, watch this—“*And having food and raiment*”—food and clothes—“*let us be content*” (1 Timothy 6:6–8).

Now, one of the greatest things that most American families need to learn is the difference between needs and wants. Many of us have wants that are not genuine needs. Madison Avenue is built upon this premise—that they can create in us needs and desires so that we will go out and buy things. Americans want something newer, bigger, better, shinier; and so, we’re constantly reading the catalogs, floating through the mall. And, people are generating in us things that we feel somehow are needs, and they’re really only wants. They are not necessities. And, the children have become victims of these things as they watch television. And, those masterminds of Madison Avenue know how to sow seeds of discontent in the hearts and minds of our children and have made them see that they will not be happy unless they have the latest product that they saw on television. And so, we have all of these perceived needs.

And then, on top of that, they tell us *what?* “You deserve it. You have earned it. You need it, and you won’t be happy without it.” The truth of the matter is, the desire for more and more is not making us happy; it is truly making us unhappy. And, surveys of married couples find out that a major, major, major problem in homes is not sex, it is not children, it is not in-laws—it is finances. And, I was at a wedding last night—but so many of our young couples today get married, and they think they have to have in three years what it took their parents 30 years to accumulate. And, they think they can go out and get it with the false god of credit.

Now, the scripture tells us here that you only have two basic needs—food and clothes. That simplifies it, doesn’t it? I mean, that’s all you need. That’s what the Word of God says: that’s all you need; that’s all I need—is food and clothes (1 Timothy 6:8). And, the Bible says, “If you have that, be content” (1 Timothy 6:8). Now, what is contentment? Contentment is an inner sufficiency that keeps us at peace in spite of outward circumstances—an inner sufficiency that keeps us at peace in spite of outward circumstances. Now, if you depend upon natural and material things for contentment, you will never have it.

Put down this verse in your margin—Ecclesiastes chapter 5 and verse 10: the Bible says, *“He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver”* (Ecclesiastes 5:10). Now, now, you think if you could just get more, it could satisfy you? The Bible teaches just the opposite.

Sometimes people get on a raft in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, and they have not enough water. And, they’re surrounded by water, and they think, “Well, maybe just a little drink of salt water would be better than no water at all.” But, if you drink salt water, what happens? It makes you thirstier. And, you drink more, and it makes you thirstier. And, that’s the way material goods are: it’s like trying to satisfy your thirst with salt water.

Warren Wiersbe told of an old Quaker who was in his house, and next door was a new family moving in. And, they were just unloading everything that they had—you know, all the stuff that we gather, that we accumulate. And, they were putting all of the toys, and all of the tools, and all of the finery, and all of the gimmicks, and all of the furniture, and all of these things they were bringing into the house. And, this old Quaker was standing over there watching all of this stuff go into this house, and he’d learned what the Bible says: “Having food and clothing, be content” (1 Timothy 6:8). Finally, when they got it all in there, he went over there, and he said, “Friend, if thou dost ever have anything that thou thinkest thou needest, come and see me, and I will tell thee how to get along without it.” Oh friend, that’s what we need to learn—the difference between our needs and our wants. Not to want something is even better than to own it—you don’t have to take care of it.

I’m telling you, there’s a false god in the land today, and that is the god of credit, who will give us things that God has not necessarily supplied. Friend, I want to tell you, there is one thing that money cannot buy, and that is poverty. You need credit cards for that. Did you know that a lot of people may be looking around for a good investment? Pay off your credit card debts, and you’ll be making about 20%. Where else could you get an investment like that? I mean, you think about it. Why should you pay about 20% more? Why should you cut your family income like that—because you carry those little credit cards? I’m not talking about for convenience; I’m talking about so you can have more. Many of our young couples today need to learn what God’s Word says: “Food and clothes—be content” (1 Timothy 6:8). Some need to get those cards out and have a little plastic surgery. I’m very serious about that.

Where is contentment found? Look in the Word of God—look at it. Young couples, look at it—verse 6: *“But godliness with contentment is great gain”* (1 Timothy 6:6). Now, if you are godly, you’re wealthy.

A. Your Personal Value Is Revealed by Godliness

Let me say this—that your personal value is revealed not by money, but by godliness—your personal value. So many times we look at a man—there are stocks, bonds, real estate, cars, homes, etc.—and we say, “Well, he’s worth this,” or, “He’s worth that.” You cannot measure worth by money. Godliness is worth more than the bank account. That’s what God’s Word says. And so, when you ask, “What is an individual is worth?”, what an insult to Almighty God if you say he’s worth what he thinks he owns. If you want to know what any item is worth, you know how to find out what an item is worth? Find out what somebody will pay for it. I don’t care how much you think what you have is valuable—you think all that stuff is worth all that much? Try to sell it, and then you’ll know what it’s worth: what someone will pay for it. Any appraisal will tell you that. Isn’t that true?

Now folks, what are you worth? Jesus died for you. You’re valuable. I mean, with His precious blood, He poured out His rich, red, royal blood for you. And, you are valuable, and don’t you ever, ever, ever measure your worth by your bank account. Don’t you do that. I’m telling you, friend, that your personal value is revealed by godliness.

B. Your Personal Virtue Is Revealed by Godliness

Your personal virtue is revealed by godliness. Do you think that God measures how good you are by how much money you made? That’s exactly what Paul is warning about in verse 5: “There are those with perverse minds who say that gain is godliness” (1 Timothy 6:5)—that is, “if you make a lot of money, then somehow you are more virtuous than somebody else.” That is not so. Your value is not measured by your money; your virtue is not measured by your money. That’s an incorrect barometer of your worth and of your virtue.

C. Your Personal Victory Is Revealed by Godliness

And, I’ll tell you something else: your victory—your victory—is not measured by your bank account. Do you think that the most successful person is the person who has the most money? That’s what everybody else says: “He’s a successful man. She’s a successful woman. Look what he or she has accumulated.” Well, I want to ask you a question: Who is more successful—the rock star Madonna or a godly school teacher who has a meager salary? Who is more successful? Now, if you tell me that the rock star Madonna is more successful, I’m going to tell you Paul has just described you in verse 5—“perverse mind”—“perverse mind, supposing that gain is godliness”—that somehow that is the blessing of God (1 Timothy 6:5). Success is not measured by the amount of money that you have in the bank.

And, I’m telling you that your value, your virtue, and your victory are not measured by money. You let people put this stuff on you, and you go around sitting in a corner,

perhaps, walking with Jesus, and loving God with all your heart, and thinking you're a failure—the devil told you that. The Bible says that *“godliness with contentment is great gain”* (1 Timothy 6:6). Now, you can be successful and have money, and you can be successful and not have money—but success is not measured by the amount of money that you have. David says, *“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want”* (Psalm 23:1). That is, a little girl said—she misquoted it, but really quoted it right: “The Lord is my shepherd. I've got all I want.”

“Godliness”—*“godliness”*—*“with contentment is great gain”* (1 Timothy 6:6). And, what we need to do is get our families together—now, listen to me—sometime soon, before this series is over. We're going to help you, I hope, to get your family together—to have a family conference. One of the very first things we need to do is to confess the sin of discontent. Did you hear me? Confess the sin of discontent. Another thing that we need to do is to have a thanksgiving and a praise service. We need to think about what Jesus Christ has done for our family, and we need to add up everything that we own that money cannot buy and that death cannot take away, and then we need to praise God for that. It needs to be a family affair. Get your children together. Have a praise service.

And then, what I would like for you to do, honestly—children included; let them in on it—take a frank look at all of your debt. Look at it, and write it down. It will be as painful as getting on the scales after New Year's, but I want you to do it—I want you to do it. I want you to write it all down: how much you are paying on interest. And then, as a family, set a goal, saying, “We will get out of debt, and we will do it as a family. We don't have to have a new coat. Our car will go 20,000 more miles. We don't have to have the latest gadget, or gizmo, or whatever. And, we, as a family, are going to get ourselves out of debt. And then, we're going to celebrate when we do.” Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing for a family to do together? It'll take a lot of pain. Some of you are trying to hide from your wife, your husband, your children what the family situation is like. How wonderful when a family comes together as a team and says together, “We'll do it as a team, and we can celebrate as a family—as a family.” Do you know how to unify anybody? Get them all working on the same problem—that'll bring unity in your family. When you get all of the members of your family working on the same problem, you'll find a family unity that money cannot buy. Just say, “Hey kids, we've got a problem. Wife, husband, we have a problem.”

Now, here's the first thing I want you to understand—listen to what we've said: the lack of wealth cannot take away genuine commitment—excuse me, genuine contentment. If you have God in your family, you're rich—you're rich.

II. The Loss of Wealth

All right. Now, here's the second thing I want you to learn: the loss of wealth is inevitable. Look, if you will, in verse 7: *"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out"* (1 Timothy 6:7). Now, a lot of people don't believe that. They somehow think they're going to take it with them.

I think I told you about a man who had heard that you can't take it with you so he decided at least he would try. And so, he put all of his money in a big jug with a handle on it and put it in the attic. He was going to die in his house. The attic was right over his bedroom. He figured on the way up to Heaven he could snatch it in that jug and see if he could take it with him. And, sure enough, he died. And, after everybody had come and gone, the wife went up in the attic to see if his jug was still there. And, you know what? It was still there. She thought, "Well, maybe he should've put it in the basement." Now folks, whether you put it in the attic or whether you put it in the basement, you are not going to take it with you.

Look at this verse again: the Bible says, *"We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain [we're going to] carry nothing out"* (1 Timothy 6:7). Now, now, we need to understand this. Again, if you want to know how much you own, really, add up everything that you have that money cannot buy and that debt cannot take away, because money talks. It says, "Goodbye." And, if it doesn't say goodbye to you, you're going to say goodbye to it.

Now, the Bible says this: put down this verse—Proverbs chapter 23, verses 4 through 6: the Bible says, *"Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not"*—that is, "Are you going to keep looking at nothing?"—*"for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven"* (Proverbs 23:4–5). And then, put down what old Job said in the Book of Job 1, verse 21: *"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD"* (Psalm 1:21). Folks, when you're born, you're born naked; and when you go, you're going to go shred of all this world's goods. And so, you don't need wealth to give you contentment. And, number two: What you do accumulate you're not going to be able to keep.

When will we learn this? A country woman knew it when she said, "I wear this world like a loose garment," and that's the way we need to wear it. A great missionary, a statesman, Jim Elliott, said, "A man is not a fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." There are certain things that we cannot keep. There are certain things that we cannot lose.

Now, sooner or later—sooner or later—we're going to die, and they're going to have our funerals. If Jesus doesn't come first, we're going to die, and they're going to have

our funerals. Now, I want you to imagine your funeral. Here you are—right here in the casket. And, here’s everybody coming by to look at you. Now, what do you want them to say about you? “Well, he really did spend long hours at the office. He really was a good business manager. He really knew the stocks and the bonds. He was a shrewd operator.” Is that what you want them to say about you? What do you want your children, your grandchildren, your wife, your husband—what do you want them to say about you? There you are.

You know, I serve on the board of Focus on the Family. Jim Dobson is a personal friend, and Jim was telling some of us in a small meeting about a time when he was up with his family playing Monopoly. Have you ever played Monopoly? Well, it’s a great game. By the way, I enjoy playing Monopoly with my grandkids. And, Jim Dobson was playing Monopoly; and boy, he was killing everybody. I mean, he had all the green ones. He had Boardwalk and Park Place. He had everything out there, and he had hotels on all of them. He owned the railroads. He owned it all. You couldn’t get around the board without paying old Dobson. Boy, he was just raking in the money, making everybody in the family mad. After a while, he had it all stacked up there; and finally, he just wiped everybody out. They were so mad at him—got up and went to bed. And, he sat there looking at that pile of play money, all those hotels. Everybody had been peeved and went to bed. There he was—the winner. Jim said, “I had to put it all back in the box,” and he said, “I thought to myself: ‘Isn’t that like life? Isn’t that like life?’” We spend all our lives getting it all away from everybody else; and when it’s over, they don’t like us and we put it all back in the box. One of these days, folks, you’re going to put it all right back in the box. We didn’t bring anything into this world; we’re not going to take anything out (1 Timothy 6:7). Now, we need to understand this.

Do you know what prosperity is? Let me give you another word that sounds like it—posterity. Prosperity is posterity. What are you leaving behind in the hearts and minds of your children? What are they going to say when they come and look into that casket at your funeral? They’re not going to be talking primarily about your bank account. Again, listen—you can’t take it with you. When will families learn this?

III. The Love of Wealth

Now, here’s a third thing I want you to learn. Now remember, we’re talking about the lack of wealth. Then, we talked about the loss of wealth. Now, let’s talk about the love of wealth. The love of wealth may be dangerous. Look, if you will, in verses 8 and 9: “*And having food and raiment let us therewith be content. But they that will be rich*”—now, what this literally means is not those who are going to be rich; it means “those who determine to be rich,” “those who will to be rich,” “those who say, ‘This is my life’s goal’”—“*[those who] will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish*

and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:8–10). Is your desire—your ambition—to be a rich man, a rich woman? Then, you, my friend, are headed for disaster. You are walking on thin ice. I'm not saying it's wrong to be rich. Many of the most godly in the Bible were rich. But, if your burning ambition is to be rich, you're headed for trouble. And, I'm telling you that this is what many people have as their goal in life—is to be rich. And, God's Word is so clear about this, if that is your goal.

Why is this? Well, sometimes you hear a person say in a commencement address...and he will say something like this concerning money: "Let me give you people some advice: make all the money you can, just so you make it honestly." Now, that sounds like good advice, but that's terrible advice—terrible advice. No man has the right to make all the money he can, because if he makes all the money he can, then he's going to be making money when he ought to be doing something else. He's going to be making money when he ought to be spending time with his family. He's going to be making money when he ought to be in church. He's going to be making money when he ought to be praying. He's going to be making money when he ought to be sleeping. He's going to be making money when he ought to be fishing. Money will become his god if he makes all the money he can.

Now, the Bible teaches that you ought to be productive, and the Bible teaches investment. The Bible does not teach sloth. The Bible does not say that you're more spiritual because you're poor. Some of the meanest people I've ever met are poor people. It's true. Some of the nicest people I've ever met are successful people. But, the Bible does not say... And, when I say "success" let me reiterate that success is not measured by wealth or poverty; it is measured by godliness. But folks, I want you to listen to me: if your desire, if your burning goal, if the thing that consumes you is to be rich, then you're headed for trouble, if that is your priority. And, many people who desire to be rich become victims of get-rich-quick schemes. The Bible says in Proverbs 28 and verse 20: *"A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent"* (Proverbs 28:20).

Now, you say, "Well Pastor, what is my relationship to these things?" Well, doesn't the Bible say that *"godliness with contentment is great gain"* (1 Timothy 6:6)? "So, what, therefore, is my ambition—to be rich?" No, it's Matthew 6:33: *"seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* Now, God knows you have need of things; God knows you have need of food and clothing. And, not only does God want you to have all your needs met, but God is a good God, as we're going to see, who's going to give you a lot of things you don't need just because He loves you. And, God is not a God who is a cosmic killjoy, who makes you squirm like

a worm in hot ashes, God is not saying that “all I want you to have is food and clothes.” That’s not what God is saying. But, God is saying that’s all you really need—that “if you have me, and food, and clothes, you can be content.” That’s what He’s saying.

IV. The Luxury of Wealth

Now, here’s the fourth and the final thing I want you to see, and we’re talking about the lack of riches—the lack of wealth—that cannot take away contentment. And then, he’s talking about the loss of wealth. He says, “You know, you’re going to give it all back anyway. You’re going to put it all back in the box” (1 Timothy 6:7). Then, he talks about the love of wealth. He says, “If your desire is to have wealth, you’re headed for trouble.” And then, he talks about the luxury of wealth—the luxury of wealth. Some people do have wealth.

Now, notice verse 18: *“Charge them”—“charge them”—“that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life”* (1 Timothy 6:18–19).

Now, here’s the fourth and final thing: the luxury of wealth brings responsibility. And, by the way, I would say compared to most people in the world, everybody in this congregation is wealthy, compared to most of the people in the world. Now, there may be some exceptions to that, but I would say by and large, we’re all luxuriously wealthy compared to most of the people in the world. Now, let me tell you this: the word *responsibility* goes with the luxury of wealth. You see, we are stewards; we’re not owners. I mean, God says, “What do you have that you’ve not received?” *“The earth is the LORD’s, and the fullness thereof”* (Psalm 24:1). All God has done is He has loaned it to you; God has made you a steward over it. You’re not an owner. Now, if you think you’re an owner, you don’t understand the Bible. Now, let me tell you the difference between a steward and an owner: an owner has rights; a steward has responsibilities. God is the owner; He’s the One with the rights. We are the stewards; we have responsibilities. The Bible says, “A steward is a man who’s to be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2).

A. When Is a Wealthy Man in Financial Bondage?

I’ve talked to you about the financial bondage of those who don’t have much and have put themselves in debt. Did you know that you can be wealthy and be in financial bondage? Did you know that? Let me tell you about the financial bondage of the wealthy.

1. When He Seeks Satisfaction in His Money

A wealthy man is in financial bondage if he seeks satisfaction in his money. Why? Because he will never find it. Do you know that even a poor man has an advantage over a wealthy man? At least the poor man has hope that, “If I can get enough, I can be happy.” The rich man says, “I have it, and I’m still not happy.” He doesn’t even have the hope anymore. So, there’s the financial bondage of the rich when they seek satisfaction in their ownership.

2. When Wealth Increases His Worries

All right, I’m going to tell you again, a wealthy man is in financial bondage when his wealth increases his worries. Now, think about it—there are people today who cannot get a good night’s sleep—not because of their poverty, but because of their wealth. Proverbs 15, verse 6 says, *“In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble”* (Proverbs 15:6). Now, if your revenue is based somehow on your inordinate desire to get rich, all you’ve bought for yourself is trouble. You’ve pierced yourself through of many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:10).

3. When He Becomes a Slave to His Money

A rich man is in financial bondage when he becomes a slave to his money. I mean, if you’re a slave to your money, you’re still in bondage. The Bible says in Proverbs 23 and verse 4: *“Labour not to be rich”* (Proverbs 23:4). That is, you are a laborer—you are in bondage. *Money is a wonderful servant; it’s a poor master.*

4. When He Has No Treasure in Heaven

A rich man is in bondage when he has no treasure in Heaven. *“Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven”* (Matthew 6:20).

5. When He Dies a Christ-less Death

A rich man is poor and in bondage if he dies a Christ-less death. Proverbs 11 and verse 4: *“Riches profit not in the day of wrath”* (Proverbs 11:4). You think you’re going to roll out the cart, say, “Here God—here are a few millions. Lord, here are a few thousands. Lord God, let me on into Heaven.” No—*“riches profit not in the day of wrath”* (Proverbs 11:4).

B. The Responsibilities of the Luxury of Wealth

So, what are the responsibilities of the luxury of wealth? Well, let’s look at them and see. The luxury of wealth brings responsibility, and he mentions four of them. And then, we’ll be finished very quickly here.

6. Be Humble

Number one: Be humble. Notice verse 17: *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded”* (1 Timothy 6:17). Hey folks, hey, if you’ve got more than

somebody else, don't you strut your stuff. You're not better than somebody else because you happen to have more. Be humble. Warren Wiersbe says, "Material wealth is either a window through which we see God or a mirror in which we see ourselves."

7. Be Trustful

Number two: Be trustful. "[Don't] trust in uncertain riches, but [trust] in the living God" (1 Timothy 6:17). You think you've got goods laid up for many years? Friend, an air bubble can hit your brain in the next 15 seconds. What good is your money then?

8. Be Joyful

Next, be joyful. Notice again what he says: "but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17). Again, God is not a cosmic killjoy. God is not trying to say, "I want to keep you poor. I want to keep you down in the dust." No, God is a good God. "The LORD [thy] God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11). And, the devil will get you to think that, somehow, that God doesn't want you to have a good time—but He does! We're going to talk next week about the family fun—the family fun.

"God...[gives] us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17). And, if God has given you a fine house, and God has given you a fine car, and God has given you a bank account, and God has given you good things, I am so happy for you. That's wonderful! Just don't trust in it—don't trust in that. "Trust...in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17).

9. Be Generous

Be humble, dear friend. Be trustful. Be joyful. And, last of all, be generous if God has given you much. Look at it here: "That they [may] do good...be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (1 Timothy 6:18). Don't squeeze it and hold it. You're a steward; it belongs to God. If God has given you wealth, it is an opportunity and it is an obligation. By the way, let your children see... Let your family—let your family—be known as a family that knows how to give and how to distribute.

Now, we're talking about family finances. And, the devil—the devil—has tried to ruin our families and to keep us from understanding what this good book says. Later on in this series we're going to have some seminars. We're going to bring in some experts—I am not a financial expert, but I know this book—we're going to bring in some financial experts who are going to teach us from a biblical basis how to get out of financial bondage.

Now, listen to me: the greatest wealth that you have is not in the bank. If you have children, the greatest wealth is your children. Some people say, "Oh, children—they make a rich man poor." You've got it backwards: they make a poor man rich. Friend, a poor man can't take his money to Heaven. I'm taking my children to Heaven—I'm taking

my children to Heaven. Thank God for a Christian family. Thank God for the things that really matter. *“Godliness with contentment is great gain”* (1 Timothy 6:6), and that godliness comes when we give our hearts to Jesus Christ and trust Him as our Lord and Savior.

Conclusion

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Would you begin to pray for your own heart and then pray for those round about you? Just pray, “Dear God, I want to be godly so I can be content. God, I want to be godly so I can give You glory.” Then, pray for those round about you.

How many would say, “Pastor Rogers, I’ve given my heart to Jesus Christ, and He has saved me; and I know He has saved me because I’ve been saved and born again. If I should die today, I would go straight to Heaven”? While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you can give me that testimony, would you lift your hand and hold it up high? Thank you. And, take it down. Well, you might say, “Pastor Rogers, I couldn’t lift my hand because I don’t have that assurance. But, if a person can know that they’re saved, I want to know.” Well friend, you can know. The Bible says, *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that [you] may know that [you] have eternal life”* (1 John 5:13). And, it comes by believing on the name of the Son of God.

Now, if you want that assurance, here’s what I want you to do: while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want you to pray this prayer: “Dear God, I am a sinner. My sin deserves judgment, but I need mercy. Jesus, You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. You died to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You. I believe You’re the Son of God. I believe You died for my sin on that cross. Thank You for doing that. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And, right now—right now, right now, this moment, this very moment—I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart. Forgive me. Cleanse me. Save me, and begin now to make me the person that You want me to be. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”